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ABSTRACT

A study examined academic literacy in high-risk South African students entering postsecondary education, and the relationship of academic literacy to instructional development. Data were gathered in discussions with academic staff at South African universities and technikons and at the University of Saskatchewan. The report begins with background information on education in South Africa, focusing on these topics: the effects of separate school systems and Bantu education; the need for academic literacy; the relationship between education, economics, and morale in education; and tertiary academic institutions. Academic literacy and instructional development are then defined, and South African approaches to them, including current research, are examined. Examples of six types of initiatives at a number of South African institutions are then described. Five approaches to academic literacy at the University of Saskatchewan and one Australian example are offered for comparison. Conclusions are drawn about the South African experience, and suggestions for improving academic literacy programs and administration are made. (Contains 41 references.) (MSE)

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Technical Report

Reflections on Academic Development: What We Can Learn from the South African Experience

Ruth Epstein

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I welcome your input and feedback.
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Reflections on Academic Development: What We Can Learn from the South African Experience

Ruth Epstein

September, 1999

Start with cooperation. You can no more teach without the learner than a merchant can sell without a willing buyer. (from Wong, 1996, p. 47, based on the teachings of Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching)

Introduction

At the TESL Canada '99 plenary session I attended in May 1999, Jill Bell encouraged educators to look in the mirror, not only at the flaws and attributes that we observe in our teaching but also at the complex background to our teaching situation—that is, at the students and their contexts and the context in which teaching occurs. If you hold a mirror in front of yourself and, while still holding the mirror rotate your body in a full circle, your image remains constant, but the background image changes—that is, the context changes. Bell uses the mirror analogy to encourage reflective teaching by language instructors. In this paper, I wish to make a case for reflection amongst all educators in post-secondary educational institutions. What can we do in particular to improve our teaching in ways that promote access of, support for, and retention of learning to under-represented and at-risk learners within our ever-changing contexts? I believe that in improving the educational experience for this group of students, the entire student body will benefit.

Complaints of poor preparation of under-represented students for tertiary academic study are common, especially amongst academic staff at tertiary educational institutions (TEIs). Institutions have sought to address the challenge of under-represented students who need support through study skills programs. However, such efforts may not get at the heart of the complexity of the difficulty, which requires more than quick-fix solutions. One country grappling with this topic on a large scale is South Africa. The experiences and recent efforts in this nation can do much to inform academic institutions at home.

This technical report is based on a sabbatical study in which I examined a number of subjects in South Africa, among them academic literacy for students entering post-secondary educational institutions. I was also interested in the relationship of academic literacy to instructional development (ID). I hoped that this study would provide us with information that we could use in Canadian post-secondary educational institutions.

The report is based on discussions with academic staff at South African universities and technikons, and University of Saskatchewan academic staff. Current literature on the topic has been used to support and supplement information from interviews. In this report, I set the scene by providing a general background to education in South Africa. This is important, as the last 50 years of history South African history has motivated the focus on academic literacy in their tertiary educational institutions. This is followed by descriptions of academic development, specifically academic literacy and instructional development in South Africa and Canada. Models of academic literacy programs in South Africa are provided. Samples from a previous sabbatical study and from programs at the University of Saskatchewan are offered to see how they compare and what we can learn from a variety of experiences. Based on my work in instructional design and what I learned in this study, I summarize components that I think institutions, academic staff, and those involved in academic development should consider when addressing academic literacy. I also raise questions and issues for reflection, and hopefully action, regarding academic literacy. Throughout the paper, boxed text is included to highlight some of the things that I think we can learn from the experience of others.

This paper is intended primarily for those at post-secondary institutions who are interested in academic literacy for students. Those involved in instructional development will also find the paper of interest. The paper is also intended for a more general readership, such as staff at the secondary level and people involved in retention of students who are struggling with their studies. The author welcomes your input and feedback.

Our look in the mirror starts with an examination of the background image of education in South Africa and how it has resulted in the situation they find themselves in today.

The Background Image: Education in South Africa

The Effects of Separate School Systems and Bantu Education, and the Current Need for Academic Literacy

During the four decades of apartheid in South Africa, the white minority (approximately 13% of the population) had access to the highest quality education. While separate government-funded educational institutions were made available for the black, Indian, and coloured majority, it is generally agreed that the education at these institutions was inferior in quality for a number of reasons. A major factor affecting the lack of success of students of colour in higher education was the accepted pedagogy, known as Bantu education, after the Bantu Education Act of 1993. It stressed discipline and product-based and rote learning rather than the development of critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, abstract notions, and independent inquiry. Because matriculation examinations, in the past and to the present day, tested only factual knowledge, they were and are poor predictors of success in tertiary education (D.

Ayliff, personal communication, January 28, 1999). Bantu Education certainly did not prepare students for higher level academic study. The effects of this policy live on today as teachers have not received training to renew their teaching methods to incorporate pedagogies that are more suitable for students, especially those in disadvantaged areas.

Primary and secondary education during apartheid was designed to maintain the division of people and domination by whites. Thus, only white students received an education that prepared them for academic study at universities (K. Saycell, personal communication, March 1999). During apartheid, separate education systems and institutions were established for black, coloured, Indian, and white populations. Each system was administered by its own provincial government department. The DET provided schooling for Blacks, the House of Representatives provided schooling for the Coloured population and the House of Delegates for Indians. A core syllabus was the basis for schooling in all of these departments, but the syllabus could be expanded or enriched for a particular racial group. For example, the DET syllabus could be manipulated to promote certain agendas (M. Mitchell, e-mail communication, Sept. 9 1999). Thus, during the previous regime education institutions became instruments of propaganda, replicating the political convictions of the Nationalist Party and embedding learners in a "culture of conformation" (J. Heydenrych, e-mail communication, Sept. 1999).

Today, students, regardless of race or ethnicity, may choose to go to whatever school they please. However, since the 1994 change in government, and in spite of government policy, there has not been much change in classrooms in disadvantaged areas. For example, although English supersedes the students' mother tongue as medium of instruction (MOI) early in their elementary education[1], many teachers, especially in rural areas, do not speak English well. Consequently, most of the classes were and still are conducted at least partially in a language other than English. Thus, many students who graduate from these schools have very weak English language skills and have developed little or none of the academic capacities required for tertiary academic study. TEIs in South Africa tend to refer to these students either as educationally "disadvantaged" or "ill-prepared" for post-secondary study.

During the decade prior to the breakdown of apartheid, and especially since April 1994 when the new government was democratically elected, an increasing number of students of colour have been entering historically white tertiary educational institutions. Many of these students are not prepared to cope with an English MOI and with the conventional pedagogy of white TEIs. It is important for the success of South Africa today that people of colour be educated.

Until the end of apartheid, educational disadvantage was a problem for a minority of students at TEIs. With the influx of students from the majority population, academic literacy development is now an immense challenge. Current efforts towards the goal of outcomes-based education is described in South Africa's new Curriculum 2005 policy (Musker, 1997), is designed to help overcome the effects of past inequities in education. However, it will be at least a generation before students educated under the new curriculum reach university. The following section addresses the current situation in greater detail.

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[1] The exception of course is in schools where the MOI was Afrikaans.

Today: Education, Economics, and Morale

Today, disparity in education in South Africa is perpetuated, but now along economic rather than racial lines. That is, rather than educational quality being based on colour, today it is based on ability to pay. So, even though new government policy encourages students to attend whatever schools they choose, the economic barriers to do so are great. South African schools are provided with government funding (which is being reduced or eliminated in private schools), but this covers only basic costs such as salaries. Parents pay extra if they want their children to have enhanced resources and well-educated teachers. This higher quality education usually occurs in former white (Model C) schools. As a result, the more a family is able to pay, the better quality of education their children receive.

The provincial governments can generally afford only to pay salaries, although in some cases, government may also pay for resources such as textbooks and paper. While it may seem that the national commitment to education is small, a full 20% of South Africa's national budget goes to education (K. Saycell, personal communication, March 1999). Where does the money go? There are a number of reasons why governments in South Africa cannot provide financial support to education. First, the government is still paying for the administrative structures, salaries, and other costs related to apartheid's divisions in the education system. This is supposed to change soon after the election scheduled for June 2, 1999 when the administrators who worked for those separate systems will no longer be guaranteed employment. Second, stories of disorganization and corruption in schools are common.[2] Third, South Africa has a huge disadvantaged and coloured population who cannot afford to pay taxes, so the country's tax base is small. Further, the apartheid government left the coffers empty, so when the new government took over there were no reserves to support education. Finally, even if poor people could find the money to pay for some additional resources, a culture of non-payment exists.[3]

Across South Africa, then, one sees a range of schools. There are private, urban schools in solid buildings on beautifully landscaped, enclosed grounds that serve the very wealthy, including the rich from abroad. But there are many more overcrowded schools serving the poor who often live in squatters' camps. These schools sometimes operate out of makeshift shacks with crater-like holes in the floors and walls, and an insufficient number of rickety desks.

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[2] For example, in 1999 in one of South Africa's provinces, one government department refused the tender recommendation of another government department to supply paper to the schools. The recommended tender was dropped in favour of one that had not even submitted an estimate, and the paper supply never arrived at the schools. In another province, someone tampered with senior matriculation results. And in yet another incident, a disturbing story in the media headlined threats by students against academic staff to ensure passing grades. Still another story reported a large number of "ghost schools," that is, schools that are being issued salary cheques, which are being cashed. School inspectors have found that no such schools exist!

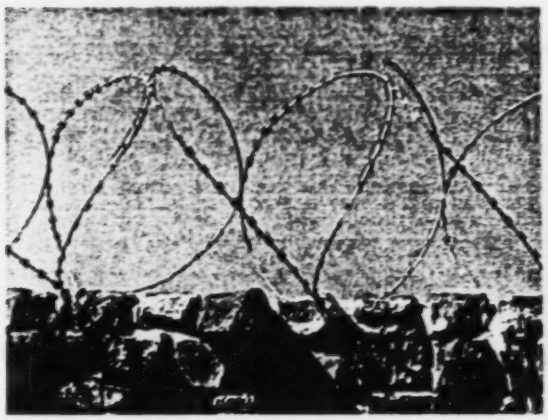
[3] The culture of non-payment is a result of the apartheid years. In some instances, government paid to cover the basic needs of blacks. Where blacks were required to pay for services such as water, they often simply refused as a protest against the apartheid system, although water was not cut off for sanitation reasons. However, a culture of non-payment arose to the extent that even today people are not used to paying for many of their services. Many people believe that education to a tertiary level, in particular, is a right and should be free.

Students in the "tin school" near Pietermaritzburg.
Kwazulu Natal. There were 85 students in this class.

The badly damaged bulletin board with nothing posted on it
illustrates the poor state of resources in many township schools.

Through "retrenchment and redeployment,"[4] efforts to at least equalize the student-teacher ratio are being made. However, the system is structured in such a way that by the time schools know their enrollment figures for the coming year, teachers have already been placed. In addition, many of the most highly educated teachers will quit teaching before moving to dangerous, disadvantaged areas to teach. Instead these teachers are taking severance packages. Thus, some of the best-qualified and most experienced teachers are being lost to the education system and in some cases to the country. Finally, retrenchment and redeployment do not deal with the gap in resources. The result is that overcrowded schools remain overcrowded, have poor resources, and are staffed with the least qualified and least-experienced teachers.

And there is more to the story. Morale in disadvantaged schools is low. Reports abound of teachers and administrators, especially in poor schools, who do not show up for school. Reasons for this vary. Some state that teachers are demoralized. Others claim that the principal does not discipline teachers for absenteeism and is often absent also. Others argue that poor schools are in dangerous areas and teachers may be afraid to attend. Indeed, I saw schools protected from the communities in which they were located by brick walls or chain-link fences and razor wire.



Razor wire atop high fences is a common sight around South African schools and homes.

Lunch programs such as the one shown at this rural school ensure that children are well-fed while they study.

The people of colour who make up the majority have remained poor because for more than a generation they have not had access to education or well-paying jobs, if they could find employment at all. They remain unable to pay for better education so their children can be on a more equal footing with white students. It appears that the effects of apartheid, then, will be perpetuated if these situations are not addressed.

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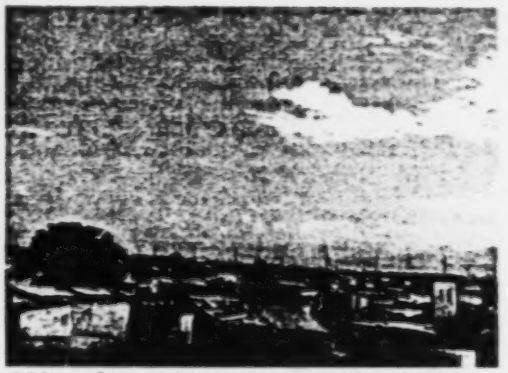
[4] The *White Paper on Education and Training* and *Schools Education Act of 1995* project the vision of a reconstructed education system and a regulated process of school governance and funding. This includes "redeployment and retrenchment" of teachers. Redeployment and retrenchment are military terms (inappropriately applied to education, in my view and the view of teachers I spoke with) and refer to efforts for greater cost efficiency in the education system and improved teacher to student ratios. Many educators believe that these efforts are short sighted and that cost efficiency in the long run will not provide the increased number and quality of teachers the country will need.

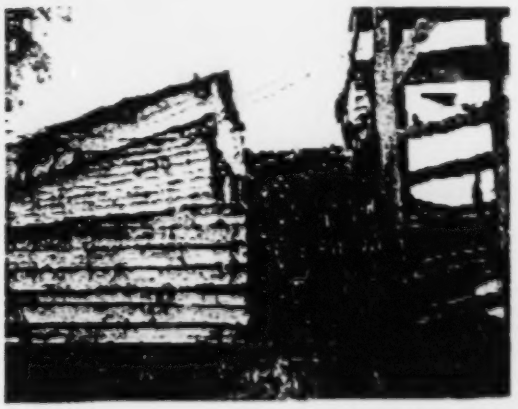
A Poignant Comparison

How the rich live near Capetown.

People in squatters camps build their shacks around outhouses, water supplies, and light standards set up by government.



Miles of squatters camps can be seen en route from the airport to Capetown.



Two views of housing in Soweto

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Tertiary Academic Institutions in South Africa

During apartheid there were white TEIs attended mostly by whites with a small quota of students of colour. There was one Indian university in Durban-Westville and a number of black universities attended by only black and coloured students in the "homelands." These were known as historically black universities (HBUs). Later Vista University was set up in several urban township locations to serve black and coloured students living in those areas. HBUs were set up to divide people yet give the impression that government was committed to the education of all. HBUs are increasingly under-resourced and, therefore, provide a poor quality education (C. Boughey, personal communication, February 9, 1999). They are built in a way that discourages student groups from meeting together, presumably for past fears that they would form anti-government resistance groups on campus. In 1981, Vista University was set up at several locations to educate blacks in urban area townships. The intention was to maintain separate racial groups, and many say that the education at Vista is not of high quality. Students who wish to transfer to white TEIs from either the HBUs or Vista are still under-prepared for the demands of academic study.

One wonders why universities populated supposedly by forward-thinking academics did not oppose more strongly the student quotas restricting the numbers of students of colour who could attend TEIs inflicted by the apartheid regime. One likely reason was funding. Typically, Afrikaans universities (universities which use Afrikaans as the MOI) were heavily funded by the white nationalist government, while English universities (universities which use English as the MOI) received funding from other sources as well as the South African government. Thus, the English universities operated much more independently of government and could make their own policy decisions more easily. In fact, as time went on, the University of Capetown (UCT) did ignore the quotas in defiance of government restrictions. This shows in UCT's well-developed academic development program. The Afrikaans universities, however, often received 80–85% of their funding from government, forcing them to toe the line on apartheid policies or risk financial hardship.

Since the breakdown of apartheid, previously under-represented students, that is, the students of colour who make up the majority of South Africa's population, have been pouring into white institutions. According to Boughey (personal communication, February 9, 1999), no student today would attend a black TEI if she or he could afford to attend a traditionally white one. This is largely due to the poor quality of education in black TEIs that accept everyone, sometimes apparently regardless of matriculation results. It is also because today previously segregated people have a desire to modernize and have all that is available to white society. Education is seen as one route to this.

What Can We Learn?

The above description raises the severe effects that colonization and political policies have had in South Africa. What can we learn from this? It is important to reflect on the fact that Canada is also a colonized nation. In more subtle, but in no less real ways than in South Africa, our history has caused alienation and affected access to and success in post-secondary education for groups in our society.

Defining and Connecting Aspects of the Image: Academic Literacy and Instructional Development

Before proceeding to address how under-represented students are gaining support at South Africa's TEIs, it is important to define academic literacy, the approach used in South Africa to redress educational disadvantage amongst learners. A discussion of the interrelationships between academic literacy and instructional development is also provided. The following three subsections of this paper allow us to turn our mirror in ways that reflect the different aspects of academic development as we begin to think more about ensuring access to, support for, and retention of learning for under-represented students.

In this paper, the term academic development is used to encompass academic literacy and instructional development. Instructional development refers to the improvement of instruction for academic staff that ultimately enhances both teaching and learning. Academic literacy is defined in detail below.

Academic Development in South Africa: Focus on Academic Literacy within Specific Disciplines

As we have seen in the previous discussion, under-represented people in South African post-secondary education are disadvantaged by poverty and poor academic preparation. This includes insufficient facility in the English language, which is the medium of instruction in TEIs. To address these needs, academic institutions have set up academic development (AD) units. These units are usually set up as independent centres, or housed within academic departments, usually departments of English or language and literature (IHEDSA, 1997).

A major thrust, of AD at most South African TEIs recently has been to develop students' abilities to succeed in academic study. Over the years that they have been in operation, AD units have usually been funded partially by the university and partially by corporate donations or grants to students from international agencies.

At one time, the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs within South African AD units focused on bridging and study skills support for educationally disadvantaged students. However, the students often saw these programs, delivered by white academic staff, as gatekeepers, again excluding them, holding them back, and dividing them from the privileged white population. Given the legacy of apartheid, it is understandable that such efforts of whites may be viewed with suspicion. EAP programs became known as "English for African Peoples" programs. The terms "bridging," "access," and "foundation" courses also gained disfavour. In addition, the ineffectiveness of quick-fix programs that spanned several disciplines have prompted staff within AD units to examine academic support more closely. Today, the term "academic literacy" is used to cover a range of needs often addressed over an extended time period to educationally disadvantaged students (C. Goodier, personal communication, February 1999; K. Saycell, personal communication, March 1999).

Paxton defines academic literacy, drawing on Gee, as follows:

> Literacy practices here are understood as incorporating all the social practices of a particular group, the way the group thinks, interacts and believes, as well as the way it reads and writes. Therefore, becoming fully literate means mastering the 'discourses' of the group in the sense that Gee uses discourses to include not only the ways of using language but also the beliefs, attitudes and values of the group (Paxton, 1998, p. 137).

Chrissie Boughey (n.d.1) explains the term academic literacy further. She states that just as new academic staff members must over time become accustomed to the appropriate behaviour of their positions, so too students must learn the rules of academia over time, rather than in a one-term course that crosses academic disciplines. Others agree. In a recent study, Ko concluded after interviewing a number of students that "the passage of time allows students to become more confident and to gain experience and familiarity with their university courses and the format and assessment criteria of assignments and examinations" (Ko, 1999, p. 39).

Boughey also believes that such competencies cannot be achieved in isolation of the student's intended area of academic study. In fact, academic literacy might be more appropriately termed, academic literacies (A. Knott, personal communication, February 1, 1999). In one study, four models of academic literacy support were identified. The most effective model is the "progressive" model which has an open admissions policy combined with a placement exam, and semi-intensive English plus a reduced academic load in the student's discipline. Next effective is the "bridging" model which is similar but without open admission or placement tests. The "traditional" model offers pre-freshman courses to conditionally admitted students. The "conservative" model was deemed the least effective and simply involved language training, plus academic courses if students meet entry requirements (Dehghanpisheh, 1987 in Ko, 1999, p. 8).

Others agree that concept-building should be embedded in useful, challenging, and relevant content (Dison & Law-Viljoen, 1995, p. 499; V. Webb, personal communication, March 1999). That is, academic literacy programs should be discipline-specific and incorporated into the curriculum of a discipline as well as relate to the lives of the students. From this perspective, academic literacy is closely associated with curriculum and instructional development. Paxton (1998) asserts that it is the role of academic staff to "assist students in a process of apprenticeship in the discipline" (p. 136). She adds that AD staff working with discipline experts can help shift the attitude of such apprenticeship from a negative to a positive one.

Boughey says that students need to learn to build knowledge via a constructivist approach, and that reading and writing are best learned as processes of constructing knowledge within a specific discipline rather than in general English for academic purposes programs (personal communication, February 9, 1994). In addition, many educators agree that students enter academic study with experiences and expectations that affect the acquisition of the specific capacities expected at academic institutions. They often find the values, attitudes, and abstractions of academic study puzzling and alien (Paxton, 1998, p. 138). For example, in South Africa students often come from backgrounds that understand the world as being based on daily life (common-sense perceptions). If these students wish to attend the white TEIs in South Africa, they must be supported in developing different and often more

abstract ways of thinking associated with their field of study. In this view, it is not student deficiency that causes them to struggle with their studies, but need to become aware of the specific expectations of each discipline. At the same time, the institution and academic faculty must make adjustments to a greater variety of students, cultures, and student needs.

One might argue that South African institutions should make adjustments and adaptations for the growing population of previously under-represented students. However, this must be done carefully to prevent the perception that those institutions are seen as lowering standards. Given the country's history, this is unacceptable from the perspective of the students and the country's entire educational system. Both the students and the new constitution stress the need for equal opportunity for all groups. Tertiary education not only needs to be seen to be, but actually must be, of a high quality for all. Many AD experts recognize that the answer lies in closely examining the needs of both disadvantaged and mainstream students, and building academic literacies directly into curricula, that is, into the delivery of content. It means teaching content in concert with the specific expectations of the discipline. This approach would obligate those developing and delivering instructional development programs to examine student needs and to work with academic staff to identify the content of curricula and how it is best taught and made transparent to students. The challenge is to incorporate discipline-specific literacies into the curriculum, not add on more to the already demanding workloads of students and faculty. It is my belief that this approach helps not only disadvantaged and under-represented students but all post-secondary students. It also implies more student-centred curricula and improved instruction.

What Can We Learn?

The above discussion defines the academic literacy approach for support of disadvantaged students in South Africa as follows:

- the development of academic literacy is a long-term process of adjustment to a new "culture" (i.e., social practices) of academia
- the development of academic literacy is based on first knowing how students have learned in past and how they make sense of their lives
- those who need assistant are not seen as "deficient" but as needing to have academic expectations made explicit to them
- academic literacy is most relevant to students when it is discipline-specific and incorporated into curricula
- academic literacy involves helping students learn to construct knowledge, and think abstractly and analytically
- academic literacy also involves empowerment. For example, language is associated with identity and identity with empowerment. Therefore, ways are found to help students adjust to academia without losing their identities.

Research on Academic Development for Students

South African AD units are diligent in their quest to support students, constantly exploring and contributing to the literature in this field. They recognize generally that there is a great diversity of students now entering tertiary study, and that these differences and identities should be acknowledged, appreciated, and tapped as resources (Moore, Paxton, Scott, & Thesen, 1998, p. 13). The student group overall is much less homogeneous than it was previously and they will require flexible, generic, problem-solving skills to enter the country's economy (Moore et al., p. 9–10).

Kapp (1998) identifies three interrelated explanations that get at the heart of the language, cognitive, and cultural difficulties of South African students entering tertiary study (p. 26–28). First is the argument by Cummins and Swain (1986) that because students have experienced subtractive bilingualism, they have not developed the cognitive academic capacity necessary for tertiary study. This capacity must be developed for student success. Second is the argument by Gee (1990) that the culture of post-secondary institutions is alien to students who need to develop both cognitive skills and the social practices in which those skills are embedded. In effect, they experience culture shock when entering study in a particular academic discipline. Thus, the expectations of each discipline must be made explicit to students within curricula. Third is the view that educationally disadvantaged students in South Africa have not had the opportunity to learn English in school and expect tertiary education to resemble the deficient experience they had during their school years. Added to these three factors is the fact that language is associated with identity, and that there are strong links between language and power (Moore, Paxton, Scott, & Thesen, 1998, p. 12). Students must be aware of these facts so that they can combat feelings of alienation and disempowerment while they study. There are a number of South African AD publications demonstrating the commitment to student support. While the main thrust is usually academic literacy, there are also some articles on instructional development. These publications include the following:

Academic Development, published by the South African Association for Academic Development (SAAAD)

AD Issues, published by the Academic Development Program, University of the Western Cape.

Discourse, Journal of the Rhodes University Academic Development Centre.

South African Journal for Higher Education, currently published by the University of South Africa (Unisa).

What Can We Learn?

It is important to take a research-based approach to academic development. For example, those working in academic development in South Africa publish the results of academic literacy programming to contribute to the literature. This supports teaching as a scholarly activity.

Academic Development in South Africa: Focus on Instructional Development

An examination of the *Institute for Higher Education Development in South Africa (IHEDSA) Directory* (1997) reveals that instructional development is also important in academic development in many South African TEIs. In addition, there are other AD roles listed such personal and career counselling for students, student language development, information technology or computer support and development, and audio-visual services. The following discussion focuses on the involvement of TEIs in instructional development.

Instructional Development at Rhodes University

In most AD units that I visited, student development is the focus because of the current urgent need. While the instructional development of faculty seems less pressing for the moment, changes are afoot. At Rhodes University in Grahamstown, for example, a recent university Senate (equivalent to University of Saskatchewan academic council) decision has been made to demonstrate accountability through the production of portfolios by all academic staff. These portfolios are to include information such as course curricula, evaluation methods, and student evaluations. It is believed that there are too many TEIs in South Africa and that government will only continue to support those that can demonstrate high-quality programs.

While this appears to be for administrative purposes, these portfolios are also useful in helping academic staff reflect on their teaching. Boughey (personal communication, February 9, 1999) says that in addition to this university directive, academic staff should also be seeking to improve their curricula and their teaching to under-represented students out of a sense of social justice. Although at this point academic staff seek the help of Rhodes' Academic Development Centre (ADC) on a voluntary basis, demand is expected to increase (C. Boughey, personal communication, February 9, 1999; A. Dison, personal communication, February 8, 1999). The additional focus on instructional development as well as on the development of student academic literacy is putting pressure on ADC staff. They are struggling to develop expertise in instructional and portfolio development as well as meeting increasing demands by both students and academic staff for their academic literacy programs.

Instructional Development at the University of Capetown

In spite of the fact that a Teacher Development Centre exists at the University of Capetown (UCT) (IHEDSA, 1997), it is the Academic Development Centre that is receiving requests from academic staff for strategies that will help them address the needs of the increasing number of disadvantaged learners in their classrooms (L. Thesen, personal communication, January 18, 1999). Many of the academic staff hired in the 1960s fought vehemently against the apartheid regime. However, now that students previously denied access are in their classrooms, academics find that they do not have the backgrounds to offer the appropriate support. Thesen asserts that many need to restructure their curricula to address the student diversity that they now find in

their classrooms. Part of this is ensuring a match of objectives, content, and evaluation in academic courses. Others need help identifying if it is the English that students are struggling with, or the academic content, or both. Thus, instructional development is discussed in the context of student development, not in isolation of it. It is worth noting, that in spite of the need for change, resistance on the part of a large number of academic staff to participate in instructional development still exists at UCT. With the increasing focus on instructional development and instructional design, the Academic Development Program at UCT is changing its name to the Centre for Higher Education and Development. Also, the centre is currently developing a research proposal to examine ways to measure accountability in teaching (L. Thesen, M. Paxton, S. Shay, R. Moore, personal communications, January and February 1999).

Instructional Development at Two Distance Education Institutions

Two distance education institutions have for a number of years been involved in academic staff development. The University of South Africa (Unisa) is a very large tertiary distance education institution based in Pretoria. At the time of writing, it housed 1,500 academic staff, although positions are being cut, partly because of decreasing enrollments. Unisa has been criticized in the past for developing student study guides that were inaccessible to students because they were written in an inappropriate style, did not support students academically, and did not incorporate even basic elements of instructional design. In the past few years there has been a concerted effort within Unisa to rewrite the study guides (K. Saycell, personal communication, March 1999). This has necessitated workshops on instructional design and course writing. Training is being handled by a small number of staff in the Bureau of Educational Development (A. Goodwin-Davey, personal communication, March 26, 1999). Meanwhile, Unisa still makes some efforts to provide academic literacy for students. However, this is difficult at a distance since courses are print-based, a medium that is already problematic for students. A similar situation exists at another distance education institution, Vista University Distance Education Centre (VUDEC), which is also rewriting its study guides. These guides are often used both in distance education and at Vista's campuses. However, the frequent instructional design workshops (74 workshops in 1997) were discontinued in 1998 due to staff changes, and currently the future of this initiative uncertain (P. Beneke, personal communication, March 1999).

Beneke notes that at many universities, black academic staff were virtually non-existent in 1994. Today, tertiary institutions are employing more people of colour as part of employment equity (P. Beneke, K. Saycell, M. Paxton, personal communications, February and March 1999). While this is necessary given the country's demographics, it has also meant that some of the most experienced and well-educated white academics are being replaced by less-experienced and less-educated instructors. To compound the problem, the best black academics are being offered higher salaries by government to work in various government departments and do not remain in the university system. This has been a source of frustration for the administration of TEIs and for students who want quality education. To help address this, UCT offers a professional development post-graduate course, designed to assist black academic staff in their teaching roles (M. Paxton, personal communication, February 1999). Rhodes University would also like to develop an Academic

Development post-graduate program to address this and other needs (A. Dison, personal communication, February 8, 1999). Vista University Distance Education Centre (VUDEC) publishes occasional papers to introduce formal academic publication to new faculty and students who are potential academics.

The interplay of AD for students and academic staff is compounded by South Africa's unique situation as education and administrative systems transform to address unique challenges. Earlier in this report, the danger of changing TEIs to be less stringent was pointed out. This is different from other arguments that revolve around "fixing the students." Helping them acquire needed academic skills is only one aspect of the larger problem, and it has to occur within a context relevant to the students' lives. Some argue that the current education system and conventional pedagogy of TEIs is unsuitable for under-represented students entering tertiary study and point to a need for Africanization[5] of the education system as an alternative (D. Ayliff, personal communication, January 28, 1999). This does not mean making the system less rigorous, but it would mean a paradigm shift for academic institutions, especially in curriculum, content, and pedagogy. Thus, teaching and learning cannot be treated in isolation of each other; rather, learning can inform good teaching practice. For example, South Africans working in academic development realize that it is pointless to teach faculty how to teach their students effectively without an awareness of the sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students as well as their academic needs. Similarly, students need support to develop the level of academic literacies expected by their instructors, no matter what pedagogy is followed. Learners need to be shown how to develop explicit capacities, especially if those students have weak academic backgrounds.

What Can We Learn?

Instructional development in South Africa is, in large part, informed by students' academic needs. Because of the numbers of disadvantaged students and the great linguistic and cultural diversity of students, academic staff feel a need to improve their teaching as a matter of social justice and assurance of access and retention to under represented students. This is the case in both conventional education and distance education.

Faculty and graduate students can gain support through instructional development programs . Production of portfolios by academic staff not only provides evidence of accountability, but more importantly helps them reflect upon the effectiveness of their teaching and curricula.

(The U of S Instructional Development Program runs workshops and has other resources on portfolios.)

[5] Africanization refers to African approaches to education. It also implies the inclusion of African world views and content into curricula. This is important in the development and maintenance of African languages and culture.

Academic Development in Canada: Focus on Teaching

Academic development in Canada has tended to focus on instructional developme improve teaching approaches, and by extension, student learning. Other units on c or special programs focus on student support. However, the Instructional Developm Committee of Council, however, recognizes that research on learning must inform instructional development and plan to include such literature and opportunities for research through the centre recently approved by Academic Council.

At the University of Saskatchewan, the Instructional Development Program delivers workshops on a variety of topics. There is a web site, resource library, and *A Guide for Instructors* (Herteis, 1999), as well as a newsletter. One important focus area of instructional development at the U of S is teaching development for graduate students who are perceived to be the future instructors at post-secondary institutions. Other efforts, such as developing databases of good teaching practice is part of the instructional development program at the U of S. The College of Medicine holds instructional development workshops and has opened these opportunities to other faculty on campus. The College of Engineering has its own Centre for Innovative Teaching which focuses on faculty support in the development of instructional technology.

Most universities support international students through language centres providing English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs. Some post-secondary educational institutions have aboriginal centres such as UBC's House of Learning which offers a range of support. Student counselling services often offer short study skills courses, and writing centres may be available to students. These services all exist at the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) in addition to a Math Readiness program and University Life 101 (discussed later in this report). There are also academic literacy support programs specifically for aboriginal students. Some programs at the U of S include the Program of the Aboriginal Justice and Criminology Program (ABJAC), Legal Studies for Native People, the Teacher Education Programs (TEPs), and the National Native Access Program to Nursing. Some of the U of S programs for aboriginal learners and a few elsewhere will be discussed later in this paper. In addition, several colleges at the U of S are increasingly reserving spaces specifically for aboriginal students, and are interested in teaching that ensures the success of these students.

Reflecting on the Connections between Academic Literacy and Instructional Development

The previous discussion raises questions about the role of academic development in both teaching and learning. Does development of academic staff and that of students intersect? If, so in what ways? Can AD in one area support, contribute to, and enrich AD in the other? How can the needs of under-represented students inform instructional development? What is the role and contribution of sociocultural and linguistic diversity in AD? Should instructional development occur in isolation of curriculum development and renewal? Should AD be isolated from changes at an institutional level?

What Can We Learn

South African educational institutions and academic faculty have realized the connection between teaching and learning. Today, the needs of large numbers of a different population of students is beginning to steer instructional development and curriculum renewal. We can similarly continue to improve our curricula and our teaching by attending to the needs of our diverse student body.

Six Reflections: Examples of Academic Literacy in South Africa

Holding up more than one mirror can provide us with a thousand images...a multitude of ideas for our own programs. The section that follows describes some of the efforts in academic literacy development in South Africa. We start with some general information.

In some South African educational institutions, AD programs offer a general preparatory year for at-risk students. Other institutions have developed programs within specific academic disciplines. And in some institutions students take general academic literacy concurrently with their content area classes. Programs offered by AD units may provide students credit or partial credit for their participation as well as financial assistance. In this way, students are not disadvantaged further while gaining some of the required abilities for success in academic study.

A great deal of expertise in academic literacy development exists in South Africa. This is demonstrated in the programs outlined below. South African TEIs are committed to overcoming past injustices, and to this end they employ well-educated academic development specialists often in faculty positions to develop and deliver academic literacy programs to students. They also realize that there are not enough experts or resources to meet the needs in their country. This is exacerbated by a brain drain as increasing numbers of well-educated people leave in search of more secure economic opportunities in a safer environment. While there are some who search abroad for solutions to South Africa's problems, others are outspoken about the unique context of South Africa and the need for solutions developed within the country (K. Saycell, personal communication, March 1999). In my opinion, South African can look to other countries for ideas but must carefully adapt outside ideas to their own context.

Student Admissions and Recognition of Prior Learning

The majority of South African students, regardless of race or ethnic origin, are anxious to enter historically white TEIs where the language of instruction is English and where there are well-qualified, experienced instructors. For better or worse, English is seen as

the language of economic opportunity.[6] Often, students will go to great lengths to succeed at these institutions, in spite of weak academic skills and financial hardships.

Students are admitted to South African tertiary institutions on the basis of points calculated according to senior matriculation results in certain subjects. For example, most institutions would weight language ability heavily, based on student grades in language arts (recall, however, that matriculation examinations focus on recollection of facts). There are also alternative adult admissions (Hutchings, 1998, p. 104), similar to those in Canadian post-secondary institutions. There is a move towards recognition of prior learning (RPL) in some South African TEIs. Many educators have great hopes for RPL as a more realistic measure of students' abilities than senior matriculation results.

Matriculation results are not thought to measure potential success in tertiary academic studies (A. Lemmer, personal communication, February 1999). This is especially so given weaknesses in primary and secondary education, and given the potentially large number of older students who are now pursuing academic study. Further, there are concerns about tampering with matriculation scores (see footnote 2) and about stable standards in schools (C. Goodier, personal communication, February 1999). For this reason, some TEIs are administering their own testing. However, students complain that such testing is designed as a gatekeeper that will deny them access. This raises an important question: Should educationally disadvantaged students be excluded from tertiary study because of poor preparation or should they be supported so that they can succeed? Given the legacy of apartheid, its effect on education, and the fact that the majority of the population is under-represented in tertiary education, there may be little doubt about a just response. The following sampling of South African academic literacy programs illustrate some ways the country's TEIs are addressing this question.

1. Academic Literacy at University of Capetown and Rhodes University

An excellent course designed to promote academic literacy has been developed by Rochelle Kapp and Lucia Thesen at the Academic Development Centre, University of Capetown. The program is designed for under-represented students who are at risk of failing academic subjects because of their inexperience in carrying out academic tasks. Most of these students are on the borderline in terms of the number of points that they have for admission to university study. All speak English as an additional language. They are fairly proficient in oral English, but need help to develop reading and writing skills as well as the academic competencies of critical analysis and independent self-expression (L. Thesen, personal communication, January 18, 1999; Alfers, Dison, & Theophilus, 1999). Most are products of disadvantaged schools, and are studying under severe financial constraints, compounded now that grants to at-risk students are being reduced in favour of grants based on grades (L. Thesen, personal communication, January 18, 1999).

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[6] See technical report by Epstein (1999) on South African language policy entitled "Taming the Cobra." This technical report includes a discussion on the place of English and its effects on multilingualism and multiculturalism in South Africa.

The program goal is to provide an orientation to the academic setting. Specifically, the objectives are to help students learn the following: to actively build knowledge via a constructivist approach, to move from their common-sense perceptions to an understanding of multivoiced texts and a variety of academic genres, to think critically and analytically, and to combine their own ideas with readings to address academic topics.

This same program is used at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, where in an action research project, students and instructors were interviewed throughout the course to assess whether the course facilitated conceptual development. The goal was for students to make sense of content by drawing on their own experiences and ideas (Alfers, Dison, & Theophilus, 1999).

Many aspects of this program are similar to study skills courses that cover a common core of competencies, such as note taking, essay writing conventions, vocabulary development, dictionary and library use, and so on. However, it is unique in its critical approach to academic text. Close attention is paid to working with students' understanding of academic text in order to help them develop skills of conceptual analysis and critical thinking. In the course I reviewed at Rhodes University, the topic of culture was used since it was considered an area that crosses disciplinary boundaries, is interesting and relevant, raises awareness amongst students about their histories, and is useful to develop the cognition and independent expression expected in academic study.

The course was divided into sections, each with small, skills-building assignments throughout and a larger assignment at the end. In the first session students were asked to write in a journal and later share their personal perspectives on culture before doing any reading on the topic. This allowed students by the end of the course to recognize how their thinking had developed from the common-sense perceptions they had brought with them to the post-secondary experience to the application of critical analysis.

The readings in the first section of the course were easy articles presenting differing definitions of culture. These articles were chosen to demonstrate that a variety of definitions on a topic can exist. This was followed by a discussion on why that variety exists (e.g., because of the writers' context and experiences, the particular time when the piece was written, and other factors). Presentation of definitions gave students the opportunity to think more abstractly about the concept of culture and to accept the fact that there may be several "correct" ways to define a concept. It also helped them begin to identify with certain stances. Students were instructed to explain their emerging stances on the topic in their journals.

In the next stage, a set of four articles each reflecting a different view of culture was presented to students. The articles were by figures well-positioned to state differing views (anthropologist Robert Thornton, activist Steve Biko, academic and former activist Mamphele Ramphele, and Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe). A worksheet accompanied each article with tasks designed to help students understand the writers' viewpoints, and to realize that culture is context-bound and changeable. In addition to addressing the mechanics of text and writing (e.g., through topic analysis, summarizing, citations, essay structure, etc.), the worksheets also helped students to compare, contrast, and synthesize information from the articles. The final assignment

was to write an essay on the concept of culture. In this way, students applied what they had learned in terms of content and application of critical analysis. They were also given the opportunity to practise essay writing conventions.

First drafts were marked for content (rather than grammar). Final drafts were then submitted. At the end of the course, students were asked to again write about their perspectives on culture in light of what they had read and to compare it with their first journal entries. They were asked to reflect on changes in their learning and how those changes developed. This allowed students to monitor their learning and raised their awareness that the nature of knowledge in academic study extends beyond memorizing content (Alfers, Dison, & Theophilus, 1999). In addition to the skills covered in worksheets that accompanied readings, the following activities contributed to other AD needs: weekly visiting lectures helped them hone their note-taking skills, debates helped facilitate presentation skills, discussion of typical university assignments helped define understanding and expectations, and exercises helped them write in a variety of genres and self-monitor their writing and writing mechanics.

This course had unique strengths rarely seen in other study skills programs. First is the way that the selected written texts were explicitly dealt with. Modelling was used, an instructional approach familiar to students. The instructor modelled, for instance, internalized interrogation techniques as she read text together with the students. In this way, text was dealt with paragraph-by-paragraph, with discussions at critical points to make the writing of academic argument transparent to students. For example, the difference between the writer's opinion, and quotations and other cited facts were made clear to students. They themselves were then asked to produce similar arguments orally and in small writing projects. The worksheets facilitated this process. Next, students were guided specifically through conflicting views on a topic by specific questions and exercises in the worksheets that aided understanding of each writers' viewpoint. They were then asked to compare and contrast it with the views of others. In this way, they learned to openly address controversy in text, something they would never have been allowed to do, let alone asked to do, in previous schooling. Finally, while students are in transition, moving from their world to the academic world, they experience internal conflict. The course directly confronted this aspect of academic literacy through the topic chosen—culture. "There was evidence in many cases of students using concepts that they had learned in the course to help them reflect on and understand this process of transition" (Alfers, Dison, & Theophilus, 1999, p. 8). The topic of culture empowered students; it reaffirmed their experiences and built self-esteem as they found themselves identifying with the views of the writers chosen.

Results of Rhodes University's research showed that students developed an awareness of the dynamic nature of knowledge, developed awareness and trust in the validity of their own perceptions and experiences (not only those of their teachers), and realized that knowledge acquisition is a process that can be constructed through involving multiple inputs such as text, discussion, lectures, and one's own experience (Alfers, Dison, & Theophilus, 1999, p. 8). Students also learned in partnership with their instructors, although students sometimes complained that instructors refused to answer their questions about contentious issues related to the topic. This was partly because instructors did not always have answers and partly by design—to raise students' awareness of learning as a collaborative discourse involving themselves, their instructors, and academic text. Finally, it is interesting to note that the

instructors themselves learned much about culture from the students' experiences. This demonstrates how students and an innovative curriculum have contributed to and enriched the teaching practices of instructors in the program.

2. Writing Centres at the University of Capetown, Port Elizabeth Technikon, and Rhodes University

Writing is one of the major academic challenges of all post-secondary students, particularly those from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. According to AD faculty at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg (personal communications, March 1999), other than copying from the chalkboard, students from disadvantaged schools have had little opportunity to write during their 12 years of study. Some have never read a book, and often the assigned reading of the past was badly translated and a poor model for young writers.

I visited three writing centres at South African TEIs. All address essay writing in the English language. The writing centres at the University of Capetown and the Port Elizabeth Technikon (PET) operate in a similar fashion. The goal is to empower students by helping them build writing competencies in their discipline in a protected environment. B. Auris at PET and C. Hutchings at UCT (personal communications, February 1999) agree that students do not always know how to approach essay writing, especially acceptable essay format. They often do not understand what the essay topics assigned are asking them to do, partly because they are not yet familiar with the thought process and language of the academic discipline. In addition, they have not learned about critical argument or how to "use their own voice" to appropriately express their thoughts and opinions on a topic. Finally, students must learn to approach writing as a process involving reading, note taking, referencing, mind-mapping, summary and synthesis, identification of central idea, and most importantly, multiple drafts. According to C. Hutchings (personal communication, February 1999), there is not much difference between the difficulties of those who speak English as an additional language and the difficulties those whose mother tongue is English. It is important that post-secondary institutions are aware of the fact that *all* students need writing support.

The writing counsellors at both UCT and PET act as facilitators who are available to help students with appropriate discourse practices for their particular discipline and for academics in general (Gee, 1990 in Hutchings, 1998, p. 7). They are not grammar monitors, but help students structure their writing, compose with their own voice, and write clearly and convincingly for the intended audience. They avoid correcting English grammar and punctuation, although they may point out recurring errors such as tense jumping, word order, and word choice. Auris (personal communication, February 1999) observes that by year four, English language issues are rarely the problem with student assignments. Counsellors impress upon students the importance of drafting and redrafting written work a number of times. Oftentimes, their role is one of confidence-building. "Sometimes they only come once their fear of failure overcomes their embarrassment" (Auris, personal communication, February 1999).

Students at these institutions usually attend the writing centre on a voluntary basis. At both institutions, faculty support is uneven; some departments support the program

more than others. Auris notes that faculty members will often encourage their students to go if they have seen positive results. In fact, at PET, some academic staff actually give students an additional 5% if they get assistance from the writing centre.

At both UCT and PET, students are urged to make appointments with a writing counsellor and submit their written assignment before the meeting, although first year students who are particularly weak or students who misunderstand the lead time required before assignment due date may simply appear at the writing centre with the lecturer's instructions for their assignment in hand a day or two before the due date! Counsellors usually take 20 to 30 minutes to mark up a student's writing before meeting with the student. Meetings typically take an hour. During busy times, UCT consultants may reduce meetings to 30 minutes (C. Hutchings, personal communication, February 1999).

The UCT writing centre has been in operation since 1994. Consultants see students from first year to post-graduate levels. The UCT writing centre has specialized counsellors for the sciences and for the humanities. All receive initial training from senior consultants, but over time develop their own ways of marking student writing. Because the UCT writing centre is both a service to students and an academic research unit, staff keep careful records of each student visit, noting on a coded database the number of visits and most common errors. This has benefited students and academic staff. For instance, if a pattern is detected, such as a common problem experienced by many students (e.g., in a psychology assignment), writing centre staff may work with the lecturer to help him or her clarify the assignment or break it into manageable pieces for the students (C. Hutchings, personal communication, February 1999). Weekly staff meetings give writing consultants the opportunity to share their findings, issues, and concerns with other AD staff.

At PET, the writing consultants actually visit faculties to conduct workshops on request, although the writing centre coordinator may approach academic departments where she sees a need. This support often takes the form of helping academic staff formulate research questions and present assignment questions that will help students write essays that are appropriate for the discipline. Auris (personal communication, February 1999) recognizes that she must be very diplomatic when dealing with academic staff because of their sensitivity when she suggests changes to the curriculum, assignments, or teaching approach. However, she also claims that academic staff, may themselves not be aware of what it is exactly that constitutes a well-worded, fair, but challenging assignment. She sees it as her role to point that out to them.

At both institutions group workshops, usually for first year students, are offered. At PET, these workshops are in a series and address the conventions of essay writing, such as organization, focus, revision, plagiarism, referencing, and other relevant topics. Auris will conduct workshops for students on topics specified by academic departments. She is also currently conducting a pilot program for students who need research skills development for writing honours theses. In addition, she plans to visit local township high schools to initiate writing skills programs. The writing centre at PET has one consultant who speaks Afrikaans to address the linguistic difficulties of those students. They would like to employ someone who speaks Xhosa, an African language spoken by many PET students. Thus, they see support in the mother tongue as important to support the development of writing in English.

There are three writing consultants at UCT and the same number at PET. Writing centre staff at both institutions typically, but not always, hold a masters degree in English, teaching English as an additional language, or an allied field. They are considered academic staff.

Staff at UCT and PET writing centres agree that they fill an essential role but feel pressured by the high demand for their services. For example, Auris says that she alone saw over 2,000 students and had at least 300 individual consultations in 1997. Hutchings notes that in 1998, their 3.5 part-time consultants saw over 700 students in individual meetings. The one-on-one tutoring of students is particularly labour intensive and time consuming, and all would like to do more work with faculty (C. Hutchings and B. Auris, personal communications, February 1999). Funding for both writing centres has been based on external funding for disadvantaged students, although both now receive some base budget funding from their institutions.

The Rhodes University Alternative

Rhodes University has, since 1996, been using an alternate approach to assisting students with their writing. The approach is inexpensive to run because it does not require meeting space. They employ writing respondents, usually upper level students or graduate students, who participate in two half-day workshops that prepare them for responding appropriately to students' writing. Rather than meet with students, writing respondents write detailed comments directly on students' essays and might never meet the students seeking their assistance. The writing respondents' main role is to give students a sense of audience so that the students will become accustomed to viewing their writing from the readers' vantage point. They encourage students to redraft their assignments several times, but they only actually work with one draft and will never read it again. As with the UCT and PET programs, writing respondents focus on expression rather than punctuation and grammar. They do not evaluate or judge the writing, but raise explicit, clear-cut, and direct questions to raise student awareness of problems with their draft. Many of the students who utilize the writing respondents have gone through the academic literacy program at Rhodes, so know what is expected of them in their essays. While this approach seems less effective to me than the personal attention given to students by UCT and PET, the writing respondents coordinator says that feedback on the program is very positive from both students and academic staff (A. Dison, personal communication, February 1999).

3. Learning Portfolios at Rhodes University and UCT

Rhodes University

A new innovation at the Faculty of Education at Rhodes University is to involve students in the development of learning portfolios as part of their first year in-service education program. Students in this program are in the process of upgrading their education from a three-year college certificate to a further diploma in education (FDE). The use of student portfolios for first year students has just completed its pilot year. The purpose of the portfolios is to demonstrate to students their growth and development over the year and to consolidate knowledge. It is also a course evaluation tool for

instructors. The portfolios promote academic literacy by providing an orientation to students on the explicit expectations of the academic discipline in which they are used. Portfolios can provide instructors and students alike with useful formative feedback, especially if they are submitted more than once during the year. First year portfolios at Rhodes are expected to be well-organized, for example placed in a box or binder with a table of contents, and include students' resources, worksheets, lesson plans, and reflective journals.

Portfolios in the pilot year were graded by the two lecturers who initiated their use. They said that this was a huge undertaking because of the size of the portfolios (M. Hendricks, personal communication, February 9, 1999). Portfolios were initially sorted according to overall visual quality and inclusion of minimum requirements. Next, the following five criteria were applied to grade the portfolios with a mark from one to five: evidence of critical reflection, evidence of creativity, evidence of professional growth and development, evidence of organization and cross-linking, inclusion of various course components. It was agreed that the criteria must be refined for future use. Also, instructions to students need to clarify exactly what is expected and how they are to achieve those expectations (e.g., telling students how to make cross-course linkages).

During a meeting with the Faculty of Education on February 9, 1999, the possibility of assigning learning portfolios for the second year of the education in-service was discussed. The purpose would be similar to that in the first year with the added goal of having students integrate learnings across specialized topics in education courses. This is because the first year is a general year, while in the second, students take a number of specialized classes (e.g., multimedia teaching, methods of teaching math and science, methods of teaching language arts, etc.). Thus, for example, students could relate their learnings in multimedia teaching to their learnings in teaching language arts, or their learnings in teaching math to their learnings in teaching sciences. Students would also include journals that focus on classroom practice and praxis—similar to action research reports.

While there was general agreement with the idea, some concerns were raised such as the logistics of grading the portfolios and the incorporation of portfolios in the second year of the program at such a late date (the meeting took place after classes had already begun). In addition, there was a question of whether this should be an umbrella requirement for the BEd program. There was also concern regarding how the mark would be integrated into grades for each course of the program. The developers acknowledged that both a weakness and a strength of portfolios is that they are simultaneously qualitative and quantitative. This is an issue that must be studied more thoroughly to ensure fairness in grading. Finally, I would add that more should be made of the opportunity to use the portfolios as a means to develop students' academic literacy. This would probably mean portfolio submission throughout the year, a factor that may be logistically impossible in this program, given its partially distance-delivered nature and time involved to assess portfolios.

University of Capetown

The University of Capetown (UCT) has also utilized portfolios, both to measure student learning and to obtain feedback on the curriculum quality and effectiveness (Shay, 1998). A study using portfolios in undergraduate classes in the faculties of medicine, arts, and social science was conducted at the institution. The findings show that AD researchers and practitioners at UCT believe that assessment plays an important role in helping academic staff understand the process and outcomes of student learning and, by extension, improve teaching quality. Such assessments, Shay (1998) found, must have clearly defined criteria against which both students and instructors can be assessed. These marking criteria must closely match course objectives and teaching activities. The complexity of marking portfolios can be addressed by listing very specific criteria and through more than one person grading the portfolios. Also, markers attend workshops to ensure equal understanding of criteria and grading (Shay 1998).

AD staff at UCT state that portfolios are a useful assessment tool of both student performance and curriculum. Portfolios include an array of student performance and products, they are longitudinal in nature, and they highlight the best examples of student work. Thus, they reveal evidence of students' critical thinking, understanding of concepts, and creativity (Shay, 1998, p. 171), and they do this over time, from student entry to exit from a program. In this way, progress is measured both for students and for curriculum. Portfolio assessment for curriculum renewal examines student performance overall on various tasks and how that performance matches course objectives and teaching. The rich information within portfolios can give feedback that leads to the overall improvement of academic programs (Black in Shay, 1998, p. 165), suggesting that curriculum innovations ultimately benefit all students, particularly "those students at the lower end of the scale" (Shay, 1998, p. 173).

The difficulty for portfolio assessment is that it is resource intensive. Also, portfolio assessment alone cannot bear the entire burden of quality assurance. A variety of mechanisms are required for curriculum renewal (Shay, 1998, p. 174). However, portfolios are one way of bringing academic literacy and instructional development closer together, so that one can inform the other.

4. Academic Literacy in the Sciences

Port Elizabeth Technikon, the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, and the University of Capetown all have specialized academic literacy programs in the sciences. Staff at these institutions recognize the importance of associating academic literacy to a particular academic discipline. Each program is described below.

Port Elizabeth Technikon

Since 1986, Port Elizabeth Technikon (PET) has experienced increased enrollments by under-represented students in spite of government quotas. Since 1994, enrollments from that student population have increased dramatically (S. Potgeiter, personal communication, February 1999). An AD program for the sciences has been established for the faculties of applied science and engineering at PET. The program began in 1989 with only 11 students. Today, 10 staff serve approximately 100 students in those

faculties, in addition to over 200 students in other disciplines. Students are referred to the AD program because of weak matriculation results or by academic staff who see a need for student support. AD is geared to those who have come mainly from townships with poorly resourced schools.

The AD applied science preparatory program at PET is one semester in length. Students attend weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., although C. Goodier (personal communication, February 1999) notes that because of their enabling role, there is an open-door policy allowing students to drop in after hours. There are 25 students per class, which is the number that the laboratories can accommodate. The program for applied sciences includes other subjects to ensure students have a well-rounded academic foundation. This program utilizes expertise of subject specialists' to help students upgrade their scientific knowledge as well as their language abilities. The English for Science and Technology specialists, Caroline Goodier and Deanne Webb, help students develop confidence as well as general writing, understanding of text structure, note-taking skills, and library orientation. In addition, a strong work ethic is established. A course book is not used. Rather, students receive applied science-related materials. Many of the students who have progressed to advanced science studies will occasionally return to consult with AD specialists. The instructors observe that there are stunning successes from this program. According to Goodier, those who fail usually do so because they do not have the aptitude for science, have unsupportive home environments not conducive to study, or because they are unwilling to do the necessary work. Students who fail are not permitted to repeat the AD program, except in cases of illness.

At PET, students pay for about 50% of this preparatory program and the remainder is subsidized. The Academic Development Trust, a South African government funding body, provides some of the funding. Other funding is obtained through grants from international organizations and through PET. For example, in 1999–2000, PET allocated R500,000 ($125,000 CDN) to AD. The Technikon links AD to regular PET courses in order to receive part of the government funding based on full-time equivalents. Initially, the community resisted preparatory programs because they wanted their children to immediately join the mainstream, and they did not want to spend more time or money than necessary. However, because of its success, the community now supports the program.

Goodier adds that faculties other than Applied Science and Engineering are now working on discipline-specific AD programs (e.g., the faculty of business). The overall goal of PET's AD Centre is for each academic department to have its own AD program. Thus, there is a commitment to incorporating academic literacy into academic departments rather than passing it off entirely to a unit that provides a general and short-term study skills program. This promotes the involvement of PET's academic departments in reflecting on what they can do to support students in the sciences. This is in line with the most successful models of academic literacy ("bridging" and "progressive") described earlier in this paper (Ko, 1999, p. 8).

The Technikon's AD staff also work with individual faculty members to improve teaching. The pedagogy of most lecturers at PET is conforms to that of most white educational institutions. This carries the implication that it is the learners who are the only ones that must make the difficult transition (Potgeiter and Murray, 1997, p. 1).

While it is easy to single out the Technikon, I found this to be true of other institutions with at-risk multilingual and multicultural students. A "blaming the victim" mentality is not exclusive to South Africa. There are, however, academics who are sensitive to the fact that changes in their teaching and curricula help all of their students develop discipline-specific academic literacy and achieve success in their studies (S. Potgeiter, personal communication, February 1999).

In one study, Potgeiter observed a chemistry lecturer who had modified her lessons in a multilingual first year chemistry class. The lecturer used the following strategies to promote understanding amongst the students:

- she developed students' "living knowledge" as a context for conceptual development by using examples and terminologies that students were familiar with (e.g., she used an example of methane production in a rubbish dump rather than in a marsh, which many students had never seen)

- she used familiar language to explain unfamiliar concepts. This involved anticipating the language problems students might have before each lesson and preparing explanations and examples that they would understand (e.g., she replaced the word "marsh" with the South African term "vlei")

- she used roleplay involving students physically to explain things such as chemical reactions

- she developed a positive affective environment in the classroom (Potgeiter & Murray, 1997).

Potgeiter remarked that this lecturer was particularly creative and willing to spend the necessary time to make modifications to help students. She added that in other cases "lecturers are being forced to modify their input" (S. Potgeiter, personal communication, February 1999).

The Science Foundation Program at University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

Academic development at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg (UNP) is decentralized into academic departments. UNP's Science Foundation Program (SFP) began 8 years ago with nine students. Today, this year-long program has 35 students studying in the program's five courses and is a great success (M. Inglis, personal communication, March 1999).

The program goal is to help students approach content in a way appropriate to scientific inquiry. For example, students are required to participate in projects that involve articulating a research question and going through the appropriate steps to address it. This involves an examination of scientific form as well as topic analysis. Students work in groups that promote peer learning and support (M. Inglis, personal communication, March 1999). Inglis has worked on a similar program at the University of Capetown (discussed below) to develop students' scientific laboratory reports as described below.

As part of the above Science Foundation Program, students whose mother tongue is not English are required to complete the study skills courses from the Learning, Language and Logic program of the Applied Language Studies Department. The focus of that program was at one time interaction in lectures, but it now addresses reading and writing development. Content used with SFP students is based on science topics. There is also a counselling component to help build student confidence, address personal issues, and to offer career counselling.

Developing Students' Scientific Laboratory Reports, University of Capetown

In order to support educationally disadvantaged science students in its Science Foundation Program (SFP), UCT has introduced writing-intensive laboratory reports into the first year curriculum. This initiative is described in an article by Loveness, Allie, Buffler, and Inglis (1998). Intervention through guidance in writing scientific laboratory reports is helping develop appropriate discipline-specific language use and general communication skills for these students, the majority of whom speak English as an additional language. Unlike the quick reports that students usually write following laboratory activities, writing-intensive reports emphasize problem-solving in carrying out experiments. Tutorials and the laboratory itself are utilized to provide complementary instruction regarding data collection, processing, and report writing. Students are required to include in their reports the theory related to the experiment, purposes of the experiment and the report, method of data collection and processing, and presentation of results in relationship to the original goals of the experiment.

There is general agreement that in post-secondary education, writing is the main way that students are evaluated. In addition, educators agree that the cognitive processes involved in writing help students integrate academic content.

> Whether it is an essay or a report, the writing task allows the students to interact with widely varying sources of information, and provides an opportunity for experimenting with language to formulate and express the understanding gained. The task also allows the student to construct new meanings by critically interpreting, modifying, synthesising and communicating the information available in appropriate ways (Loveness, Allie, Buffler, & Inglis, 1998, p. 180).

An important aspect of writing-intensive laboratory report, then, is consistent feedback enabling students to improve their performance in successive assignments as well as develop scientific thinking skills. Because tutors mark student laboratory reports at UCT, it was important to develop specific marking criteria for various aspects of the report, so that they could provide students with explicit constructive feedback appropriate to the discipline. According to this view, holistic grades are insufficient to tell students precisely what they need to do to improve their writing assignments.

UCT developed a detailed form for markers (illustrated in Loveness, Allie, Buffler, & Inglis, 1998, p. 184–185). The main foci of the criteria were data collection and processing, and report coherence. However, each of these categories were subdivided into over 40 criteria to guide markers and facilitate effective feedback to students.

Students as well as tutors were given these criteria so they knew what was expected of them. Tutors initially complained about the number of categories they were to grade, but after a short time agreed with the value of the criteria in ensuring consistent grading and valuable feedback. It also forced developers to break down the instruction process and be clear about student expectations. Thus, writing development was incorporated into the curriculum. Rather than taking time away from the teaching of content, it enhanced both teaching and learning, that is, instructional development and academic literacy. Finally, marking criteria such as this can be developed for other disciplines with similar benefits.

5. Focus on English Language Development

Johannesburg College of Education

Johannesburg College of Education specifically addresses English language development alongside academic literacy development for teachers in training. Only 50% of the 850 students at the college speak English as their first language; the remainder speak other languages. I observed a class in academic literacy in English, taught in a classroom that was well-equipped with overhead projector and screen, chalkboard, and good acoustics. Students were seated in groups of five. Most of the students spoke Zulu, although there was also one speaker each of Afrikaans, Mandarin, and Cantonese. The course had no specific textbook. From the first activity to the last the instructor, Sandy Emslie, involved students in communicative activities. She modelled good teaching practice for the teachers in training. Student discussions of the purpose of each activity made their learning relevant and was an approach that they could transfer to their own classrooms. Emslie also involved students in discussions of difficult terminology (e.g., the difference between "look" and "see") rather than simply giving the definitions. Discussions took place in student groups as well as amongst the entire class.

It was particularly interesting to note how the instructor facilitated discussion. She taught inductively, prompting student groups to discover academic skills on their own (e.g., the difference between topic sentence and supporting sentences). She then had groups of students try to apply the skill (e.g., in their own writing). She often related what they were doing to what they would also have to do as teachers (e.g., ensure that assignments and exams for their students are based on what students have learned in class). The instructor told me she preferred to select topics that serve student needs and the content covered. She is currently starting a reading for enjoyment project with the class in which everyone will read *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She hopes to have the students read three books during 1999. Emslie (personal communication, March 1999) remarked that some students mainly required confidence building. For this reason, there are several exit points throughout the semester to ensure that students are not held back longer than necessary. This course was particularly interesting to me in the way that Emslie taught academic literacy in English simultaneously with instructional development for teachers.

The University of Port Elizabeth

Academic development at the University of Port Elizabeth (UPE) starts with English language development. The program is housed in the Department of English. Di Ayliff (personal communication, February 1999), English teacher with the department,

describes students in her program has having weak English skills. When they begin her course, they are often operating at the sentence level and are not yet ready to write paragraphs let alone essays. After about 6 months of English language instruction, she introduces literature as a stepping stone to teaching communicative competence. Unlike the approaches at UCT and Rhodes, Ayliff uses a conventional language teaching approach to develop metalanguage. She says that much of her work involves building student confidence and offering support to traumatized students. She asserts that stress amongst students of colour often high because they may be overwhelmed, alienated, and isolated by the conventional education system in which they find themselves. A major challenge is the large size of the English classes that reach 200 students due to a lack of funding for the program. There is also a credit-bearing course, University Practice and Communication, that students can take at UPE that addresses university life and academic literacy.

Code-Switching at Medunsa

The Medical University of South Africa (Medunsa) was established in 1976 to empower educationally disadvantaged students to gain qualifications in health sciences. Medunsa has emphasized community-focused tertiary education in health sciences such as medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine. The institution has also expanded to offer a bachelor of science degree as this was an identified need in the black community. Medunsa also focuses on health-related research and community service. In 1994 enrollment was 3,469, and the institution can accommodate up to 4,000 students with the possibility of further expansion (Medunsa, May 1999). Medunsa is located approximately 30 km northwest of Pretoria and serves all of southern Africa.

The MOI at Medunsa is English. The institution therefore offers an English course to students as part of their first year. The course is divided into four components (Kalonji, 1995):

- the thematic component covers issues on language education, democracy, the environment, and health
- the structural component develops academic literacies, including oral communication, reading and writing skills development, visual literacy, and computer literacy
- the research component addresses needs related to academic assignments
- the attitudinal component promotes facilitative teaching as well as active learning, and it emphasizes co-operative learning and creative expression rather than rote learning and competition.

An issue raised regarding the English course was whether or not code-switching (i.e., switching between African languages and English) enhances or impedes the development of English. In a study by Kalonji (1995), students said that using their first language is relaxing and helps them acknowledge their tribal identity. They also said that it facilitates learning difficult concepts and generating creative ideas because they can translate from their mother tongue to English to communicate their message. A few

students struggled to think in English. The majority recognized the importance of using mostly English in their English classes so that they would get accustomed to fluent use of the language. "This does not mean that they undervalue their own languages" (Kalonji, 1995, p. 584). Academic faculty agreed with students that mother tongue should only be used to promote challenging expression of thoughts and concepts or making the transition to English. Metacognitive skills in English, however, should be emphasized. They recognized that competence in more than one language is a resource that can be used. They added that it is important that students are aware of the difference between the standard of English expected in academics as opposed to locally developed varieties. Therefore, some saw grammar instruction as important in developing the accuracy required in the sciences. It is interesting to note that AD researchers at the University of Capetown concur with the view that code-switching can contribute to learning when used appropriately (Kapp, 1998).

6. Tutors and Mentors

Tutorials are used at several South African TEIs. Generally, students attend a lecture, often given to a large student number at the beginning of the week. Students then attend smaller tutorial groups with a tutor twice a week to work with the content provided at the lecture.

While this system potentially should work well for academic literacy development and application of theoretical content, depending upon the institution's approach it was more or less effective. For example, in one institution I attended, the lecture is taped so that students could review it later. This would be helpful to students, especially students who speak English as an additional language. However, a tutorial that I observed in that institution gave students little chance to voice their opinions. The tutor reviewed the lecture in semi-lecture style herself. The group work in which students participated seemed contrived and without explicit purpose. And the tutorial workbook appeared to be haphazardly assembled, with no clearly stated objectives to guide tutors or students. While the tutor called for questions, virtually no wait time was allowed for students to formulate inquiries or comments.

When poorly led, tutorials can be an additional source of humiliation for students. However, when effectively conducted, they can facilitate cognitive and linguistic development, change negative attitudes to positive attitudes, enable meaningful classroom exchanges, and create a forum to discuss "unacknowledged features of institutional culture which entrench existing power relations" (Kapp, 1998, p. 22).

Mentorship is also used at a number of South African TEIs. Port Elizabeth Technikon has a mentoring program in all faculties in which groups of new students are matched with advanced students. The advanced students help new students adjust and act as links between the groups and the lecturers. The mentors discuss relevant academic problems in weekly meetings, often in the students' language. The purpose is to focus on areas where the lecturer feels miscommunication may occur (Potgeiter, personal communication, February 1999). The mentor receives some training and a small stipend. Ideally, mentors speak English, but not as their mother tongue. Thus, they understand the language and cultural difficulties that new students encounter.

There is a similar mentorship program at VISTA University in Port Elizabeth that is also administered by academic faculties. At VISTA, mentors do receive an orientation, but according to the AD coordinator, the program it is not coordinated or funded as well as it should be for success (A. Knott, personal communication, February 1, 1999). Finally, at Rhodes University, five students are assigned to one mentor, usually a successful second or third year student (Alfers, personal communication, February 1999).

As previously mentioned, the writing-intensive laboratory tutors in the UCT Science Foundation Program had guidance at least in the grading of laboratory reports. This was helpful to both tutors and students. In another UCT situation, tutors are speakers of at least one or more African language and use those languages, not to avoid English, but as required to "guide interpretation of new discourse, and enable students to voice difficulty and to practise the discourse in class, thereby gaining confidence and fluency" (Kapp, 1998, p. 30). This is a tremendous source of comfort for students as it includes them in discussions. Also, the tutors serve as positive role models for beginning students and contribute African perspectives to the discipline (Kapp, 1998, p. 29-30). Thus, at UCT, tutorials are seen as venues for academic literacy development.

Flaws in the Glass

I do not mean to give the impression that all TEIs in South Africa are committed to and successful at academic literacy. There are undoubtedly those that see education as a business and cut corners. Nor do I believe that I visited institutions that take a "swim or sink" approach. However, I did visit one college that had curricula imposed from the outside, giving instructors little time for AD. Still other institutions were short-staffed or too poorly resourced in other ways to implement AD and recognized this shortcoming.

What Can We Learn?

These South African examples illustrate a number of factors that we should consider to promote academic literacy:

- feasible academic literacy programs that contribute to the complex needs of disadvantaged students should be developed and delivered by specialists. Graduate students can assist as role models, mentors, and tutors.
- monitoring student progress in academic literacy programs and in their regular studies can inform academic literacy programming
- academic skills should be developed in incremental steps over a sufficiently long time frame (i.e., more than one year would be required by many)
- students should receive some kind of recognition that is acceptable to the institution (e.g., partial credit) for their participation in academic literacy programs

- students' experiences can be recognized through recognition of prior learning
- students' experiences contribute to learning (e.g., use of the first language to enhance learning; traditional knowledge; life experiences)
- academic literacy involves more than discrete study skills such as essay writing and note taking. It also involves the development of critical thinking, dealing with controversy, learning to construct knowledge, orientation to learning from a variety of academic approaches and discourses, making cross-disciplinary connections, thinking and writing independently and with one's own voice, and gaining confidence
- it is essential to make the expectations of academia and specific disciplines explicit to students; students must know what is expected of them within a discipline and be guided through real situations to learn how to meet those expectations. This partly involves identifying specific curriculum objectives based on expected student outcomes of instruction. It also involves clear criteria for grading assignments.
- academic literacy can be developed through empowering themes (e.g., culture) that teach content and academic skills. Themes should be interesting and relevant to students and help them adjust to academia as well as thrive in their home and community environments
- alternative pedagogies such as group work and peer learning, modelling, experiential approaches (e.g., case studies and simulations), use of induction, portfolios, journalling, and the physical involvement of students (e.g., roleplay) can be used effectively to deliver course curricula
- student assignments can be used to as feedback on curricula as well as to promote learning
- common student problems in a course or program can lead to curriculum renewal
- tutors and mentors can be used as models, to bridge theory and practice, and for student empowerment, confidence-building and support

Our Own Image: Canadian Examples of Academic Literacy Development

Canadian universities have been involved in the development of programs for aboriginal students for a number of years. At the University of Saskatchewan, the *Framework for Planning* (1998) has documented in writing the institution's commitment to increasing post-secondary access and ensuring support to the growing population of aboriginal people in the province, as is seen in the excerpt below:

> 4. Responding to the needs of aboriginal peoples.
> In Saskatchewan, the task of responding to specific, local needs and, simultaneously opening doors to the world, is particularly pressing in the context of aboriginal peoples. Making available to aboriginal peoples the full resources of the University is one side of that equation; integrating aboriginal knowledge into the curriculum and practices of the University is the other. At the University of Saskatchewan we must dedicate ourselves to making available to all aboriginal peoples the full range of our programs and we must adopt strategies that will improve their ability to succeed. Above all, the University must appreciate the need for aboriginal peoples to have an effective, meaningful voice in their own educational experience and, in true partnership, to find in the University a place where their culture is both reflected and at work in defining and achieving the institution's objectives in research, teaching, and community service.

Peter MacKinnon, University of Saskatchewan president supports equity and diversity within our institution, noting particularly "the responsibility this university has to improve the participation of aboriginal students in post-secondary education" (MacKinnon in On Campus News, Sept. 1999, p. 3).

The cases below, one from Ontario and five from the University of Saskatchewan illustrate the ways in which academic literacy has been developed in some programs in Canada. Other case descriptions can be found in Epstein (1995).

The following descriptions illustrate initiatives here. However, it is my belief that partly because of lack of resources until now, programs for aboriginal people have not addressed academic literacy in the coordinated, research-based way that institutions such as the University of Capetown in South Africa have. We must at some point ask ourselves why this is. No one wants to see the commitment written in the *Framework for Planning* as simply words that look good on paper. Rather, resources should be allocated not just to creating special entry to post-secondary education but also to ensuring retention and success amongst sectors of the population under-represented at our institutions.

The Aboriginal Resource Technician Program, Ontario

During a previous sabbatical leave (Epstein, 1995), I visited the partially distance delivered Aboriginal Resource Technician (ART) Program at Sault College in Sault Ste. Marie. This program makes efforts in a number of ways to ensure student success and retention through academic literacy and cultural support. The program is designed to overcome the difficulties of distance education and to address the sometimes weak academic backgrounds of trainees. For example, developmental components in English and mathematics are available for first year students. Study packages for each course and on-site sessions are developed by content experts and instructional designers who recognize and address the academic challenges of this particular student body. Traditional knowledge, based on the informed input of program Aboriginal Advisory Committee members ensures that community needs and appropriate cultural content is incorporated throughout the curriculum.

The multi-mode delivery system that includes teleconferencing, telegraphics, practical on-site field training, and on-campus sessions is used to support teaching and learning. The face-to-face sessions include the following: on-campus orientations, laboratory sessions, computer training, twice weekly supervised practical field training in northern Ontario, and southern field training to enable northern trainees to experience a different environment. In this way, instructors and supervisors meet with students often and are able to identify and address support issues. Students are assured related summer employment through their work sponsors or an indigenous organization. This ensures that students continue to apply knowledge during breaks in their program and also maintain motivation.

Ninety percent of the ART program is delivered in the home community, allowing participants to continue work, community and family responsibilities, and remain in a culturally familiar and supportive setting. When they are studying at home, trainees have access to toll-free phone and fax numbers to contact instructors and support staff.

Each student is assigned a training coordinator who monitors progress, provides or arranges for tutoring as required, and organizes local support. Students have the opportunity to change their training coordinators if the relationship is unsatisfactory. A campus-based Native Outreach Support Officer is also available to monitor participant progress, and work with and encourage trainees and training coordinators. This officer provides confidential feedback to students and instructors. In addition, students have access to education and social counsellors in local communities and access to an on-campus Native Counsellor when they are on campus or by phone when they are studying at home.

Flexible time frames for the return of assignments and test writing are part of the program to ensure students have sufficient preparation time. Designing a program that does everything possible to promote success is appropriate for students who may lack the confidence required for post-secondary study, and who may need extra time and support to learn the content or be psychologically prepared to submit assignments or write exams. While it necessitates some inconvenience for faculty (i.e., they may have to mark a paper during a vacation period), it is a small one given the goal of educating this group of students.

What Can We Learn?

The above combination of academic, cultural, and personal support demonstrates a significant resource commitment, but one that yields positive results in terms of student development, retention, and success in the ART program.

Five Approaches to Academic Literacy at the University of Saskatchewan

1. University Life 101

Jana Danielson (personal communication, Sept. 21, 1999) coordinates University Life 101, a pilot program that operates out of Student Affairs and Services. The first class met Sept. 20, 1999 and sessions will proceed for 20 weeks. The pilot offering of the course includes students selected randomly through the registrar's office. Rewards for participation are both intrinsic (i.e., improved orientation to the university and study skills) and extrinsic (prizes for participation in the pilot).

In the 1999/2000 year, there are five sections of the course, one from the College of Engineering and four from the College of Arts and Science. One of the Arts and Science sections is specifically for aboriginal students. There are about 30 students per section. The six coaches who deliver the program were hand-selected by department heads from Arts and Science and Engineering. They are provided with a coaches manual. Students receive a participants' manual.

The program is based on an attrition study from the office of Student Affairs and Services (see www.usask.ca/sas/attrep.doc) for the full report. The report recommends particularly that students be explicitly informed about the expectations of university study. It also recommends that available support programs (e.g., Math Readiness, the Writing Centre, and Study Skills programs) should be advertised more vigorously and expanded and that academic advising for all first year students be mandatory (Chistie and Rathgeber, 1998). Also, high quality instructors are required, particularly in first-year.

The goal of the program is to help students learn from the experiences both within and outside of academia. Some of the session topics include lectures and notetaking, writing essays, preparing for exams, library research, campus services, critical thinking, interview with a professor, computer help, stress management, student health as well as a component which involves students in volunteering.

The program shows great promise to help students balance study with other aspects of their lives and improve retention.

2. Program of Legal Studies for Native People

Ruth Thompson (personal communication, April 1999) is in charge of student support in the Program of Legal Studies for Native People at the University of Saskatchewan. This is an eight-week pre-Law program offered over the summer. Upon program completion, students apply for admission to any regular Law school across the country.

The content focus of this pre-Law program is Property Law. The topic is divided into three components: personal property, real property, and aboriginal property. The topic of property was chosen because it is relevant and the skills that students learn through it are transferable to many areas of the Law school curriculum. Each component is offered by a different academic staff member. This is because no two instructors have the same approach; rather there are a range of approaches from didactic to critical. Thus, students are exposed to some of the teaching styles that they are likely to encounter throughout their study of Law. They become aware that course expectations vary and are not always clear cut. That is, they learn to "read" the professor.

In 1985, efforts started to explicitly develop student competence in the following five areas using the Property Law topic: legal analysis, legal writing, study skills, exam writing, and personal coping strategies, that is, managing the effect of study on one's personal life. Prior to working on students' academic literacy, the indigenous student success rate in the LLB program was 60%. In 1985, the first year of the academic literacy program, the rate rose to 79%, and in 1989–90, the 2 years in which a grant allowed extra efforts in the area, the success rate rose to 95%, demonstrating the success of this support.

To assist her in delivery of the program, Thompson has the help of teaching assistants who lead student tutorials. She also has the help of writing consultants who teach legal writing. This involves teaching legal analysis as much as writing ability. Thompson observes that the weaknesses in student assignments were not really "writing problems," but student difficulties in legal analysis. The writing consultants work with groups of students and also on a one-on-one basis to provide individual assistance. Recognizing that students need to learn to think and write in legal terms, Thompson's approach to teaching writing does not focus on topic sentences, main ideas, and introductory paragraphs, but teaches students to write legal arguments that are read in the way intended by the writer. That is, readers have expectations when they read. If the writer does not want readers to fill in their own ideas when reading, then the writing must be entirely clear. In this way, the focus of the instructors is to teach potential lawyers how readers perceive their case. Thus, instructors use the language of the content area, Law, rather than the language of English writing skills development. "This is much more palatable to students than saying to them that they have a writing problem" (Thompson, personal communication, April 1999). This demonstrates that teaching writing is more than teaching discrete general skills, such as grammar, punctuation, and writing conventions. It illustrates that writing is discipline-specific and the program must make expected ways of writing and thinking as a lawyer clear to students.

Part of Thompson's work involves providing orientations to writing consultants, teaching assistants, students, and academic staff. During the 2 years when the program

received significant financing through grants, she had more time and staff to do the orientations. However, the orientation period has been reduced to about 5 days in early Fall. While academic staff in the program are committed to student success, they often do not know how to help students overcome academic hurdles. The ideal goal would be to have faculty integrate academic literacy into the curriculum, that is, into content presentation and into assignments. To supplement faculty efforts, Thompson conducts extra sessions for students. These sessions are not compulsory, but attendance is encouraged. Attendance is high, early in the year. But, as assignments pile up, attendance, particularly that of the weaker students, drops. This is reflected in their grades. Thompson says that maintaining attendance is a challenge still to be addressed.

The goal of academic support in this program does not only make the academic expectations of the discipline explicit to students but also guides them in fulfillment of those expectations. This involves breaking down the competencies of Law for students. This takes the effort of a trained person; faculty are usually unable to break down these competencies because for them legal language is second nature.

Kathleen Makela, former New Brunswick Law graduate and current Director of the U of S Aboriginal Students' Centre, says of the Program of Legal Studies for Native People: "the skills students are taught in learning to brief, reconcile, and analyze case Law and to manage their time would have been useful to me when I was in Law school" (Makela in Klaus, 1999, p. 13). She adds that it is not only aboriginal students who have problems with their studies, but other populations as well. She notes that "the more privileged the background, the more easily problems can be masked" (Makela in Klaus, 1999, p. 13).

Thompson says that students' needs in the program vary. However, for all of them "there is a quantum leap between high school and university study and there's an equally large leap between undergraduate study and Law. It's a culture shock for students." Thus, both "academic culture" in general and the "culture of Law" are new for students. The rules of appropriate academic behaviour in Law involves abilities that must be made transparent to them and that they must learn over time.

3. The ~~Southern~~ Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP)

Skip Kutz (personal communication, May 1999) coordinates and teaches in the communications course for the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP). This writing skills course and a preparatory course in math are compulsory, but non-credit, for all first year SUNTEP students. Only students who have previously taken and passed first year English (ENG 110) are exempt from taking the communications course. While some students complain about having to take two extra courses, Kutz states that they definitely benefit from them. They take the two courses concurrently with courses in Native Studies, Cree Language, Education, and Fine Arts. There are about 20 students annually taking the communications course. SUNTEP's mandate is to offer a four-year Bachelor of Education program through the University of Saskatchewan. SUNTEP faculty teach a few of the key courses, primarily in the first two years of the degree.

The fact that SUNTEP is a direct entry program, gives it the flexibility to offer such courses based on students' needs. However, it is expensive to deliver a parallel program to the one

offered by the College of Education. Therefore, SUNTEP students are also exposed to classroom teaching, beginning their first year, to ensure they have made the right career choice. After their second year, SUNTEP students enter mainstream College of Education classes for most courses, while maintaining ties to the sponsoring organization.

SUNTEP's communication course is based on an assessment of students' needs. The course addresses basic study skills challenges and serves as a way to build student confidence. The course covers the range of topics found in many Canadian English for Academic Purposes courses: writing fluency, essay organization and writing, reading, critiquing, grammar basics, note taking, time management, exam writing, and oral presentation skills. SUNTEP students also make use of the Writing Centre at the College of Arts and Science.

Kutz works closely with the SUNTEP instructor of their first year English course (ENG 110) to ensure that students are prepared when they take that course in their second year of study. For example, the English instructor updates Kutz on the latest trends in the English course requirements. For his own resources Kutz selects textbooks that students may have to purchase for English 110.

Kutz notes that the SUNTEP instructors are sensitized to student needs, which helps tremendously in problem identification and support in their first 2 years of study. Thus, learning informs teaching in this program.

4. The Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP)

As part of the ITEP staff, Louise Legare (personal communication, May 1999) has been supporting students in the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) for a number of years. ITEP students are primarily from the North, reserves, or other rural areas. Among the student population there is a tremendous diversity in terms of their linguistic abilities in English and adjustment to academic study. ITEP is a direct entry program. About 40 students are admitted annually to ITEP and a total of about 180 are studying in the four-year program.

Students coming to campus from distant communities face overwhelming cultural adjustments. As a result of this and the diversity of needs, ITEP offers individual counselling to students to help with linguistic, academic, and personal issues. Legare usually meets with individual students to address their specific needs. For example, language is not an issue for all students. Students' language skills are a continuum from very fluent to English as second language speakers. She adds, however, that enhancing language ability is an integral part of student support. She says that 90% of the students have been raised with at least one language other than English. The focus on is retention of the students' aboriginal language and mastery of English skills for academic purposes. She understands student problems as she herself was exposed to five languages in her home.

Counselling support is focused on first-year students, although students continue to come for assistance throughout their program. Legare states that all ITEP instructors work as a team; each will diagnose and share the needs of a particular student. She starts the support process with relationship building and needs identification through talking and writing about student experiences. Then, using an eclectic approach

according to student needs, she counsels students on a regular basis. She uses a variety of materials in order to address the diverse needs of her aboriginal students.

Legare also offers group counselling for students with collective problems. For example, students in one course all may have difficulty with an assignment. Legare consults the instructor and works co-operatively with students and their instructors. She then develops a plan to tutor the group through the problem. She claims that difficulties are often a result of the differing communication patterns of the instructor and the students. For example, the instructor may take a conventional linear approach where the topic is also broken down into parts or fragments, while the students' traditional view may be more holistic. Facilitating communication between world views addresses some problems when understanding breaks down. Again, learning and teaching are closely linked in this program.

Finally, Legare says that throughout their program, ITEP students are exposed to a variety of cultural influences. Cultural teaching in classes differentiates ITEP from mainstream courses at the College of Education. This approach is required as student teachers never know where they might be teaching. Consequently, they must be alert to their context and have a teaching philosophy that is appropriate to their aboriginal backgrounds.

The efforts described above highlight the importance of instruction that takes into account linguistic and cultural differences. It also highlights the importance of academic staff working together with student support staff. Finally, critical pedagogy and cultural awareness empowers students by allowing them to effectively critique content within the program.

5. Native Access Program to Nursing (NAPN)

The Native Access Program to Nursing (NAPN) was established in 1985 through the hard work of Jean Goodwill. It is a joint program of the College of Nursing, U of S, and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College at the University of Regina. The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) is also involved in providing instruction to students. The program offers a number of services to aboriginal nursing students, including recruitment, retention, academic counselling and support, personal counselling, and advocacy as required. In 1966, the College of Nursing at U of S and SIAST formed a collaborative four-year nursing degree, the Nursing Education Program of Saskatchewan (NEPS). NAPN has a presence at both the U of S and SIAST's Kelsey campus in Saskatoon. The NEPS program allocates 20 out of 120 of its openings each year to equity seats. NEPS is now a direct-entry program; formerly it required one year of Arts and Science for entry, but dropping this requirement means that students do need support directly from a program like NAPN (NAPN, 1999; V. Amault, J. Wapass, J. Daigneault personal communications, May 6, 1999).

NAPN provides academic support by several means. First is a one week orientation program in the Fall (reduced from 9 weeks because of funding cuts). At the orientation students meet their instructors, tour the university, and discuss expectations and timetabling. In addition, the orientation covers CPR and First Aid. The aboriginal

academic counsellor in Arts and Science, also provides academic counselling to students.

Because there is such a diversity of student needs, NAPN refers students to academic support services that can best service their individual needs. For example, one of the main difficulties that students experience is writing academic papers. Students are referred to U of S Student Counselling Services as well as to instructors at the Centre for Second Language Instruction to help them with this challenge. Students receive tutorials to help them overcome difficulties in reading and in the sciences. NAPN also makes available to students two interactive computer disks to help them with their studies in Anatomy and Physiology. NAPN works closely as well with the aboriginal counsellors at SIAST, Kelsey Campus. NAPN staff observe that students rarely have difficulties with presentation skills because they work in groups on this requirement. They also generally do not have difficulties with the English language except for some challenges with scientific terminology. Students are usually tutored on an individual basis that may range from one to a number of sessions. Groups of students may also approach NAPN with a common problem and NAPN will facilitate a group tutorial session. NAPN staff add that over time the students become accustomed to the demands of NEPS and university study, acknowledging that academic literacy is a process developed over a number of years. Peer support and group outings, such as the annual trip to a nursing conference, help build the sense of belonging that is important to the students.

Tutors are paid by NAPN for their work. NAPN receives its funding through a grant from Saskatchewan Medical Services Branch. Although NAPN is an autonomous organization, the branch gives the funds to the University, which distribute them to NAPN. Funds have been cut since program inception, which used be but no longer is federally funded. This has hurt NAPN as it has had to cut services. For example, they have been unable to obtain $1,000 to hire an aboriginal elder to serve as a student counsellor.

NAPN staff sit on the College of Nursing Equity Committee and make recommendations such as a recent one for a course on aboriginal nursing for NEPS students. NAPN staff are concerned that the strict rules of confidentiality at the U of S prevent them from fulfilling their support role, as they rely on instructor feedback to help them do their work. What feedback instructors can supply includes both positive and negative feedback to NAPN on matters such as student attendance and assignments. NAPN staff remark that they have a good rapport with SIAST instructors and that SIAST is also more supportive than the U of S in providing facilities, resources, and stationery supplies, and less likely to question requests for money for culturally appropriate ceremonies. NAPN staff think that there is a lack of cross-cultural understanding and trust regarding their indigenous protocol needs, which may include expenses for food and tobacco (NAPN staff, personal communication, Ermine, 1998, p. 14). The above illustrates what can occur when AD is not adequately supported. It seems that NAPN staff would like to do a lot more but feel that their hands are tied by insufficient resources and a general lack of cross-cultural understanding.

What Can We Learn?

The examples above show that our institution has realized the need to support aboriginal students and the student body at large. Programs incorporate a number of the strategies also used in South Africa. The use of a variety of supports for students according to their needs, discipline-specific instruction, and the need for confidence building is evident and resulting in success. Many academic faculty are recognizing the need for instructional development to better meet student needs. There is a continued need to ensure that programs are coordinated and based on scholarship in the area of academic development.

There is also a need to ensure that staff working in the area have the training support and resources necessary to become experts in the area. Finally, a greater degree of cross cultural understanding and stable support at the institutional level (discussed further below) are required.

Through the Looking Glass Down Under: An Australian Example

During a previous sabbatical leave spent partly in Australia (Epstein, 1995), I was able to observe some innovative approaches to academic literacy that incorporated aspects of aboriginal culture.

The example highlighted here is mainly on one aspect of the Aboriginal Health Program at Curtin University of Technology in Perth. In this program, aboriginal students defined Aboriginal Terms of Reference (ATR) as one of the program competencies. ATRs are identified early and incorporated throughout the entire health program curriculum. By describing in detail the contexts or communities in which they will live and practise health care at the outset of the program, students articulate the settings in which they will apply their learning. At several points during their studies, they are asked to apply theoretical learnings and practical knowledge to their contexts. Thus, their cultural contexts become an integral part of their learning. The life experiences of students are validated and their community is seen as a valuable site for learning. Further, they contribute to the body of knowledge in community health care and are empowered to be competent professionals who act appropriately within their communities.

The program coordinator who developed this approach puts critical pedagogy into practice. She sees teaching as a political act that leads to social change. She argues that without ATR the program loses credibility and integrity. She describes ATR as follows:

> ATR encompasses the cultural knowledge, understanding and experiences that are associated with a commitment to Aboriginal ways of thinking, working and reflecting. ATR incorporates specific and implicit cultural values, beliefs and priorities from which Aboriginal standards are derived,

> validated and practised. These standards can and will vary according to the diverse range of cultural values, beliefs and priorities from within local settings or specific contexts. The generic approach to skill development equates to the Aboriginal holistic view of the world. (Grogan and Philpott, 1992, p. 128–9):

Students demonstrate their competencies through performance, which leads to ongoing positive action in the local workplace. Thus, participants empower not only themselves and their communities, but also colleagues in the workplace. While the program is competency-based, the ATR and the overall focus on aboriginality ensure the incorporation of culture. The program also ensures appropriate culture is incorporated into face-to-face sessions taught by non-aboriginal instructors by having aboriginal staff attend those sessions and offer the aboriginal perspective. Finally, contracts are used with students so that they cover the partially distance-delivered content at a pace that is appropriate, given their ability, and community and family responsibilities.

The developers were diligent in ensuring that the program is learner-centred. This necessitates a connection between teaching and learning in the program. It is particularly gratifying that the academic staff and administration supported this program.

The approach used in Curtin's Aboriginal Health Program can be used for professional programs in a number of disciplines. That is, the use of ATR, contracts, and aboriginal content can be applied to an aboriginal teacher education program or an aboriginal law program or an aboriginal social work program.

What Can We Learn?

The Australian example adds yet additional innovative strategies that we can use in our courses. The use of culturally appropriate terms of reference facilitates bridging theory to practice, connecting with communities, and further disciplinary development. The inclusion of aboriginal content also acknowledges and gives status to the students' culture. The use of contracts develops partnerships between students and faculty in the educational process while placing much of the responsibility for learning on the students. The Australian program also raises the importance of institutional support, discussed further below.

A Turn of the Mirror: Power and the Institution

A Look at South African Institutions

Up until now, we have examined academic literacy programs for students and explored some of the ways that academic staff have altered their teaching and curricula in support of students. We have begun to see more clearly how the challenges students experience in their learning can inform good teaching. But what about the institution and the culture that accompanies it? What responsibilities does the institution have in encouraging change? In a country like South Africa, where the number of under-represented students has been increasing dramatically since 1994, institutions must take notice and reflect on their approaches to teaching and learning. They have come to understand that success in post-secondary study is more complex and long-term than simply the acquisition of a discrete set of abilities in short study skills courses. They see that it also involves rethinking institutional values and acting on those values by allocating resources that will address the challenges they face in promoting access, retention, and success to previously under-represented populations.

Kapp (1998, p. 22) asserts that in South Africa long-term success amongst under-represented students will be low without changes to institutional cultures. She contends that "invisible practices that create 'circles of privilege'...lies at the heart of many failed programmes of affirmative action and black advancement" (Ramphele [1995] in Kapp, 1998, p. 22). She quotes from Ramphele extensively to show that the conservative views of the deficiency of marginalized students (under-represented students, women, etc.) are confirmed when those students cannot live up to the mainstream institutional culture. She observes, for example, that in South Africa even the most liberal academics may discount students who are not fluent in English, yet those same academics have never studied an African language. She asks: What does it do to the credibility of academics and the institutions in which they work when they thrive in a nation where the local languages and cultures that comprise the majority have had no impact on them? While this view is extreme, it is important. In fact, many South African institutions are aware of the need for basic self-examination to address access for under-represented students.

Many students in South Africa are ambivalent about English and the culture that accompanies it. They recognize that English is necessarily the medium of instruction at TEIs. They, in fact, choose English as the MOI and conventional educational approaches as the ones that will ultimately best meet their goals. This attitude is also found amongst some indigenous peoples in Canada who may use English for survival and success in the modern world, but who also recognize that "primal language identifies the person and is, in essence, the person" (Ermine, 1998, p. 19). Many South African students do voice concerns regarding disruptions to their own identities caused by the power of English and the culture that accompanies it. They are also aware that those who easily fit into the culture of English are within a circle of privilege (Kapp, 1998, p. 23–24) and these individuals will succeed within the culture of the TEI and, by extension, beyond. Kapp (1998) warns that as previously under-represented students assimilate, TEIs will use the availability of these students to admit fewer under-

represented students who currently gain access through special admission. While this is the worst case scenario, educational institutions must be alert to the possibility and guard against reverting to practices that unfairly deprive access to under-represented students.

A Look at Canadian Institutions

Do we fare better in addressing academic literacy for under-represented students at Canadian institutions? In the view of some faculty, we could do much better. In the view of others we do quite well. Williamson (1999) states that "too many aboriginal people coming to the university are insufficiently prepared for the impact of the institution and the city, finding both overwhelming, impersonal, and daunting" (p. 5). He adds "the university community needs to be more genuinely welcoming both academically and socially." He also argues for acknowledging and including indigenous content to enhance our programs. Swan (1998) argues that institutions as well as staff members, indeed society as a whole, must examine their values in what he called a "decolonizing process" (p. 51).

Kathleen Makela, newly appointed director of the Aboriginal Students' Centre says that programs such as the Program of Legal Studies for Native People show that the U of S is ahead of many other universities. Part of her mandate includes exploring why aboriginal enrollments and retention are low. Makela notes "Aboriginal students who come to university are often the first ones in their families to do so. Therefore the pressure to succeed is immense, not least of all from themselves" (Makela in Klaus, 1999, p. 13). She hopes to draw on educational models established elsewhere such as consultation with elders and aboriginal educators.

The Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) seems to be quite successful in attracting and retaining aboriginal learners. Perhaps this is in the way that SIFC's mission statement[7] is actualized. In Fall, 1998 approximately 1600 aboriginal and non-aboriginal students enrolled SIFC. Della Anaquod, Dean of Student Services (personal communication, September 2, 1999) says that SIFC attempts to build a supportive environment for students. The primarily aboriginal faculty and staff do this in a number of ways including use of approaches familiar to aboriginal students (holistic learning, the four quadrants), small class sizes, personalized and individualized instruction, curricula that are culturally relevant, use of role models, including the experiences of learners in the curriculum, study skills support, and the participation of elders in many aspects of programming and teaching. She notes that education at SIFC is proactive in its goal of ensuring student success. She adds that "when you come to SIFC, you see your reflection," that is, you become empowered and confident in all aspects of who you are. Because of this, the College attracts other

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7 "The Mission Statement of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) is "to enhance the quality of life, and to preserve, protect and interpret the history, language, culture and artistic heritage of First Nations. The College will acquire and expand its base of knowledge and understanding in the best interests of First Nations and for the benefit of society by providing opportunities for quality bi-lingual and bi-cultural education under the mandate and control of the First Nations of Saskatchewan. The SIFC is a First Nations controlled university college which provdes educational opportunities to both First Nations and non-First Nations students selected from a provincial, national and international base" (http://www.sifc.edu/mission.html).

cultural groups, such as Chinese students who have had experiences with education systems that do not support them culturally or linguistically. Also, a number of white Canadians attend SIFC because of the high degree of attention and understanding that they receive there (J. Bates, personal communication, Sept, 1994). Anaquod says that students and staff are able to call SIFC "home." Anaquod's comments are supported by SIFC instructors that I interviewed during a previous sabbatical leave (Epstein, 1995). In spite of criticisms of the institution, there is no doubt that compared to the environment at mainstream institutions, SIFC is attracting more students and helping them succeed.

In South Africa, institutions that cater to a specific ethnic group (like SIFC) are not feasible because of the many legislated institutional divisions during apartheid. And, in Canada, scarce resources and low populations mitigate against developing a large number of separate institutions for under-represented students. What then, can we do?

Priscilla Settee (1999), through her work with the Aboriginal Caucus at the U of S, suggests setting up a centre of excellence, similar to UBC's House of Learning. The centre would conduct research, address the myriad of access and retention issues, and develop and promote the rich contributions that Métis and First Nations people and their communities can make to our institutions. Settee notes that there have been some initiatives on campus, but, she points out that there is a need for coordinated work on cross-cultural sensitivity training with the administrators, faculty, and staff. She adds that ways must be found to increase aboriginal student retention and to help them develop skills necessary for success in academic study. Finally, she notes that omission of aboriginal perspectives, pedagogy, and content in our curricula must be addressed.[8]

Aboriginal and Conventional Pedagogy

Aboriginal approaches to teaching and learning are now being documented in books to guide educators in incorporating these teaching strategies (Stiffarm, 1998; O'Meara and West, 1996; Cajete 1994). Those methods include teaching techniques such as storytelling, personal example, modelling and observation process, community involvement in the education of children, holistic teaching and the sacred circle or medicine wheel (incorporating mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects into teaching and learning), and learning as a lifelong process (Stiffarm, 1998). In fact, most of those approaches can be found in some non-aboriginal education—usually in settings which value alternative ways of teaching and learning. They are rarely observed in conventional post-secondary education.

Conventional academic pedagogy tends to fragment knowledge into isolated components, rather than viewing a discipline as a whole and connecting it to other fields (Weenie, 1998, p. 59) and daily reality. This approach is not necessarily bad or ineffective for everyone; it has been used for decades and in many disciplines. But the use of alternative approaches in addition to conventional pedagogy might enrich and improve the educational experience overall. Canadian educational institutions must determine if the conventional pedagogy most often used is, in fact, alienating for some.

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[8] Settee (1999) notes that within the U of S curricula, there is little inclusion of aboriginal music, arts, or language. This is aside from aboriginal knowledge in the sciences.

That is, is the conventional pedagogy used in our institutions a hurdle for a significant number of students, especially under-represented students? I am not suggesting wholesale change in our institution to alternative pedagogy. A more sound approach involves taking a long-term view of academic literacy and becoming more active in helping students adjust. Our search for improved teaching partially through exploration of alternative pedagogies and innovations to address student diversity can result in positive change for the entire student body.

However we address the issue of access and support, the challenge, as I see it, is to build an environment that is more welcoming to under-represented and at-risk students. We need to support them in their efforts without submerging them culturally. This involves discussion and debate that make the issues explicit to all—administrators, academics, and students—and that deals with them openly.

What Can We Learn?

The diversity of students in post-secondary institutions is increasing. Institutional commitment to promote the changes needed for a more welcoming and supportive environment for students is essential in ensuring access and retention, especially for students who have been under-represented at our institutions.

It is important to include teaching scholarship (Boyer, 1993) amongst the responsibilities of the institution and its faculty, so that there is support, resources, and rewards for improving the quality of education. Improvements can be made through exploring alternative pedagogies, evaluating and renewing curricula, and in other ways discussed below. Institutional support will go a long way to ensuring continued emphasis on teaching scholarship and an open discussion of needs and practical solutions amongst all stakeholders.

Summary and Conclusions

This report looks primarily at developing academic literacy with at-risk students. Most of the data on academic literacy programs was collected in South Africa where the challenge is huge. Many South African institutions have taken a serious approach to academic literacy, allocating funding, human resources, and research efforts in order to develop effective programs. South Africans working in the area increasingly see that pedagogical approaches, appropriate curriculum, and student success are interrelated and that learning informs teaching practice. The experience of South Africa can inform TEIs elsewhere. As we reflect on our own programs and those in other nations, we are reminded that we have much to learn from each other.

Academic staff at South African AD units are particularly active researchers. Studies on a number of aspects of academic literacy can be found by these staff in South African AD journals and other publications. Indeed, entire books have been written on the topic (e.g.,

Angélil-Carter, 1998). Continued curriculum and program development, and associated evaluation and research will continue to contribute to the body of knowledge on academic literacy.

I believe that institutions such as the U of S can be more active in developing academic literacy programs that are based on the AD literature and in continuing to explore how academic literacy and instructional development relate to each other. The following questions, some of which were raised earlier, can facilitate this exploration: What are our institutional values related to teaching and learning, and how are those values implemented? How are learning and teaching related? Where do instructional development of academic staff and academic literacy of students intersect? That is, in what ways can one area support or contribute to the other? Is there a need to renew curricula to better address academic literacy within specific disciplines? What are the roles, challenges, and contributions of cultural diversity to academic institutions? In what way can institutional changes lead to improved instructional development and academic literacy?

It is clear that under-represented students are not entering and staying in conventional Canadian universities in the numbers that we would hope for. Those who do attend are often struggling and discontinue their studies with a sense of discouragement, even defeat. I believe that we have an obligation to provide them with support through appropriate academic literacy programs founded on research in academic development, through curricula that provide explicit orientation to academic disciplines, and through teaching approaches that promote learning. Shay (1998) states that curricula in South African TEIs that were designed for relatively homogeneous, privileged students must undergo change (p. 159–161). Are our curricula similarly inappropriate for the variety of students that we now find in our classrooms? Do we have the courage to hold our teaching and courses up to the mirror to ensure that they address the needs of all of our students and of our changing world?

The final section of this paper provides guidance to administrators, academic staff, and those involved in academic development for facing the challenge of self-reflection. The lists for each are intended to be thought-provoking, but practical so that we can continue to improve the effectiveness of academic literacy programs at our educational institutions.

Suggestions for Improved Academic Literacy

This report would not be complete without suggestions based on the information presented in this report. The lists below are based on the programs that I explored, my literature review, and my thoughts on the topic. Readers may be familiar with other programs and ideas incorporating supportive teaching and learning practices additional to this list.

The lists are divided into the following three sections: the administration of academic literacy, components of a student academic literacy program, and curriculum renewal and effective teaching and learning. In many cases, points have been worded as questions to help readers respond to what they do at present and what can be altered to develop academic literacy amongst all students, and generally make the teaching and learning experience more effective and rewarding.

The Administration of Academic Literacy

Academic literacy cannot occur in isolation of institutional and administrative support. It is most important that program administrators and academic staff have an attitude that engenders student retention and success. They must have a long-term view, taking student life experiences into account and exploring the "attitudes, values, assessment criteria, aims and curricula" as well as cater to increasingly diverse students (Hutchings, 1998, p. 117–118). Following are some questions administrators can ask about access and retention of under-represented students.

- What are our values regarding inclusion of under-represented students at our institutions and how, as administrators, do we implement those values?
- In what ways are we committed to academic support for under-represented students?
- What can we do as administrators to ensure a long-term commitment to academic literacy?
- How can we provide proper, stable funding for academic literacy and other supports over an appropriate time frame?
- What budget allocation is appropriate to support access and retention of under-represented students?
- What teaching facilities can be provided to deliver support and programs and over what time frame?
- Where should the academic literacy program be housed—at a centralized unit? Within an academic development unit? Decentralized in academic departments? Or a combination of the foregoing?
- How can we budget for appropriate and adequate human resources (academic and support staff) over an appropriate time frame?
- What systems are required for identification of at-risk students (e.g., testing, input from academic staff, student awareness and self-identification) and registration of students into academic literacy opportunities?
- Should the academic literacy program be for credit, partial credit, or no credit? Are there ways to incorporate academic literacy into curricula so that students receive appropriate recognition as they gain abilities and orientation to academic disciplines?
- Are there systems to involve the community (e.g., the aboriginal community) in some capacity (e.g., as advisors, to provide cultural knowledge, etc.)?
- Can appropriate ways be found to acknowledge indigenous expertise, for example through payment for the participation of aboriginal experts?
- As administrators, what is our level of knowledge regarding our diverse student population and how can we improve it?

Components of a Student Academic Literacy Program

The following components are listed in point form rather than in the form of questions. The list is designed for those working in the area of academic literacy for students.

1. Needs assessment involves

- identifying students' past educational experiences and contexts
- identifying sociocultural and political factors affecting student learning
- assessment of general and specific needs and abilities of students
- relating student needs to students' chosen academic disciplines
- identifying the support of academic staff within those disciplines
- identifying institutional support and resources (physical, human, financial, time).
- finding out students' short- and long-term goals for academic study in a particular discipline (e.g., career objectives)

2. Program design involves

- development of a short- and long-term blueprint for academic literacy development for the target group
- development of an appropriate pedagogical approach to academic development (e.g., ensuring student empowerment through critical pedagogy)
- development of academic literacy program goals and specific objectives
- development of content and curricula that address those objectives
- development of activities that are relevant to students and help them integrate content and gain an orientation to the discipline
- inclusion of socioculturally appropriate elements
- development of assignments or tests that evaluate if learning has occurred
- choice of appropriate delivery modes (e.g., what combination of print, in-class sessions, tutorial, audio-visual, computer, etc.)
- inclusion of opportunities for short-, medium-, and long-term academic literacy
- identification of appropriate teaching staff and their orientation to the program
- inclusion of formative and summative program evaluation through feedback from students, academic staff, and if necessary from administrators.

3. Possible program components:

- general academic literacy common to all disciplines
- writing centre with consultants versed in various academic disciplines
- English language development if required
- learning style awareness
- learning strategy training
- effectively facilitated tutorials
- tutors who can support student learning with their mother tongue
- peer mentors
- well-designed, appropriate support materials that support learning
- learning contracts
- computer training in adequate facilities
- activities that specifically orient students to the academic discipline (e.g., this may involve incorporation of academic literacy within academic departments and within course curricula)
- activities that help students apply knowledge, and bridge theory and practice such as field trips or fieldwork, laboratories, simulations
- activities that make the pedagogy used in courses transparent to students
- opportunities to discuss and problematize student experience and effects on identity (e.g., aboriginal terms of reference)
- appropriate innovative assignments such as portfolios, reflective journals, projects, fieldwork
- activities related to students' lives
- ready access to academic literacy instructors
- inclusion of indigenous knowledge
- inclusion of cultural support
- inclusion of opportunities for confidence building
- inclusion of counselling for students to address personal or family, career, and adjustment issues
- orientation to campus (physical facilities, student support services, health and recreation programs, libraries, study spaces, cafeterias, computer facilities etc.).

For Instructors: Curriculum Renewal and Effective Teaching and Learning

> *Teaching is the heartbeat of the educational enterprise.*
> *Ernest Boyer (1990)*

Why would an instructor want to participate in instructional development? Finding the answer to this basic question is the first step in beginning the process of improving one's teaching and student learning. It is important that instructors view instructional development as a positive move, not as a remedy to bad teaching. That is, it improves one's teaching and even the most practised instructors continue to participate in it.

Following are a few reasons why it is worth improving teaching practice. First, the University of Saskatchewan mission statement specifically includes our commitment "to practise scholarship in teaching so we can inspire in our students love of learning and critical thinking" (University of Saskatchewan, 1993). Among the diversity of students there may be at-risk students who will benefit from your good teaching. This necessitates cultivating an attitude of support for those students through appropriate curricula and pedagogy. It is not fruitful to blame the students and their past educational experiences, or to pass the responsibility on to other departments or support units within the educational institution. And, those involved in AD realize that it is no longer sufficient to only send students to a "quick-fix" study skills program—the continued support of good instructors will also help those students succeed. We must value the fact that an educated population is good for all of us and that adjusting to a new discipline and an academic environment is a long-term effort, involving both students and academic staff. At the very least, this might mean adjustments in curricula and teaching styles. At most it might mean questioning our basic values towards education. However, rather than viewing this as additional work, it should be approached as an exciting challenge and an opportunity for renewal.

Following are some questions that you can ask yourself to achieve these ends. The list is long but not exhaustive. It is designed for educators who see student learning as important and who value education for the betterment of society as a whole. It is designed for those who believe that learning informs good teaching and for those who are willing to renew their teaching and their curricula to achieve this goal. In doing so, they will be serving not just students who struggle in academic study, but all of their students.

I start the questioning with self-reflection and clarification of one's philosophy to education. Questions related to assessment of student needs, disciplinary requirements, and contexts as well as an appraisal of resources and institutional support are also posed. Some may only make small adjustments to a course or program of study based on responses to the questions below. Others may make major changes. Still others may not feel they need to do anything. It is my belief that it is important to try out new approaches in at least a small way and systematically test (e.g., through small classroom-based action research projects) if innovations and changes actually improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Personal Philosophy:

- What do I see as the responsibility of education in my institution and in society? What is my particular role within this? How can my academic discipline contribute?
- Does my classroom teaching reflect my teaching philosophy?
- Do you get gratification in teaching and in seeing your students learn?

Assessment of Student Needs

- What do my students know and what do they need to know? (This question applies to at-risk students as well as excellent students.)

Curriculum

- How can I improve my course curriculum to ensure student success *and* content coverage?
- Is it appropriate to include student input into the curriculum? In what ways can I do this?
- Do I have realistic expectations of my students? How do I make those expectations clear to students?
- Are my course objectives explicit and clearly stated, so that I know what content is to be covered and students know specifically what is expected of them and why?
- How can I ensure that students become familiar with the terminology used in this discipline? How can I ensure that students learn and appropriately communicate using the language of the discipline?
- How can I help students build the critical and analytical skills required for this discipline? What does critical thinking and conceptual analysis mean in my discipline? What specific abilities are involved? How can I measure whether students have achieved the ability to think critically and analyze as expected of this discipline?
- How can I relate my discipline to other disciplines to show interconnectedness and overcome fragmentation of content?

Student Participation

- How can I involve students in their learning? In what ways do students actively participate in my classes?
- Do I promote an attitude of collegiality between myself and my students? Do I think this is appropriate?
- Do I encourage students to ask questions when they don't understand? Do I encourage students to challenge concepts with which they may not agree?

- In what ways do I encourage students to participate? Do I make efforts to find merit in their questions and comments so that they are encouraged and not threatened about speaking in class? Do I clarify their questions with them when I am not sure that I understand what is being asked?
- In what ways do I raise controversial aspects of my discipline to ensure student involvement in discussions, develop critical reflection, promote problem-solving and action where relevant, and give students power over their learning?
- Do I welcome student input (e.g., into the curriculum, approach to instruction, to query concepts that need clarification) by asking for their feedback throughout the course in non-threatening ways (e.g., anonymously on paper in a suggestion box)?
- Can I read student reaction? Can I read student silence?
- Do I find some groups of students participating more than others? Why is this? Do I encourage the equal participation of women and minority groups?

Teaching Method and Style

- Am I excited and enthusiastic about teaching? Do I show this enthusiasm to my students? Am I bored and burned out? Why is this?
- How much about myself do I disclose to students? Do I tell students about my research interests?
- Do students seem to enjoy and learn from my classes? Do they attend regularly? How can I make my teaching more engaging and stimulating?
- Is my teaching paced appropriately for the level of the students? Do I give enough silent time for students to think about and respond to questions that I ask them? Do I give enough time for class activities?
- Do I lecture only when it is appropriate? Are my lectures well-organized and interesting?
- Is there a place in my teaching for innovative or alternative teaching approaches? Why or why not?
- What innovative teaching approaches have I tried recently? How do I feel when I try something new and why do I feel that way? Did the new approaches work? Why or why not? If not, what might be adjusted so that the approach works more effectively?
- How can I present content in motivational and innovative ways that supports the learning of all students?
- How can I promote critical thinking? Do I ask open-ended questions? Do I ask students to weigh the merits of opposing arguments to disciplinary content?
- Do I facilitate learning by scaffolding, that is, building knowledge from known to new concepts?

- Do I work from general to specific and back to general again, so that students can see the whole picture, the component parts, and the whole picture again?
- Is the theory presented relevant to students? How can I ensure that I have bridged theory to practice in ways that are appropriate to students' lives?
- Do I include strategies for both individual and group learning?
- Do I discuss teaching approaches with my colleagues?
- Do I take the opportunity to observe others teaching, especially those who use alternative and innovative approaches?
- How can I engender an attitude of the value of lifelong learning?
- Do I incorporate and test the effectiveness of innovative teaching methods (e.g., journalling, role play, cooperative learning, etc.)?

Activities and Materials

- What activities can I include that ensure students have learned the content?
- Do I have strategies for finding out what students know before I start teaching (e.g., through filling out information cards, short quizzes, informal conversation)?
- Do I use small, in class assignments as a way to introduce my expectations and as a way to encourage students to come to class?
- Do I have a variety of activities to meet the variety of learning styles that my students will have?
- What support materials can I provide that will help students cover the content and understand it? How should I develop those materials so that they are useful to students? Where can I get instructional design support to do this?

Student Assignments and Evaluation of Students

- Have I provided students with the number and relative weighting of assignments and examinations in the course? Do they know due dates and examination dates?
- Do my assignments reflect my course goals and objectives?
- Are my assignments clearly worded? Have I been explicit in my instructions? Do students know what is expected of them? Do students know how the assignment will contribute to or consolidate their learning?
- Do I use assignments as a way for students to improve their knowledge of the discipline as well as for the purpose of assigning grades? To this end, do I give clear feedback on assignments that will help students improve?

- Do students understand the degree of rigour that is expected? Do I disclose this fully to them (e.g., through examples of the work of excellent students I have had in past)?
- Do I have specific marking criteria for various aspects of course assignments? Do I communicate this criteria to students and markers so that they know what is expected of them and so that grading is consistent?
- Do I use assignments and resulting grades as a way to inform me regarding student learning and appropriateness of curriculum?

Course Evaluation

- Have I made provisions for formative and summative evaluation of my course?
- How could I encourage students and colleagues to constructively evaluate my teaching and my course curriculum?
- Do I discuss critical incidents and my classroom practice with my colleagues?

Nontraditional Students

- Can I make special allowances for at-risk students by using techniques such as learning contracts and by allowing delayed assignment deadlines so that they can get extra support (e.g., from a writing centre)?
- If there are students whose mother tongue is not English, do I know who they are and where I can get support for them?
- If there are many students from a given cultural group, can I use knowledge from their culture in this discipline to enrich the curriculum?
- What can I do to find out about the indigenous and alternative pedagogical approaches? How can I incorporate elements of that pedagogy into my teaching? Is it appropriate for me to do so?

Student Support

- Do I identify with my students? Do I remember what it is like to be a student and treat students with the same regard that I would expect?
- Can I use peer learning, group work, and group projects to promote mutual support amongst students?
- Am I available, accessible, and approachable outside class time to answer student questions and talk to them about their concerns? Do students know my office hours?
- Do I and can I make use of mentors, tutors, and tutorials to clarify content and promote deeper explorations than class time allows?
- In what ways do I build student confidence? What other confidence-building strategies can I use in my courses?

Professional Development

- What motivation is there for me to renew my course curricula? How can I pressure my institution to ensure time, resources, and rewards for my efforts?
- Do I know where to go for help for myself and for my students in the areas listed above[9] ? If there is no place for this kind of assistance, what can I do to lobby for it on this campus?

The above questions and points are suggestions for scrutinizing what is and what could be. It is hoped that they will contribute to improved access and retention of all students, not just those who are at-risk of failing or dropping out. As administrators, academic faculty, and instructional development staff explore barriers and opportunities for students, other considerations are sure to come to light that will improve overall educational quality at post-secondary institutions.

[9] The instructional development program at the U of S provides support for academic staff. Information on the university's academic literacy programs can be obtained from the Office of Student Services.

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